USS Springfield Returns to Guam Following Indo-Pacific Deployment

Release From Lt. James Caliva, Commander, Submarine Squadron

NAVAL BASE GUAM (August 31, 2025) – The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Springfield (SSN 761) returned to its homeport, August 31, after completing a routine deployment in the Indo-Pacific, reaffirming its vital role in maintaining security and stability in the region.

“USS Springfield showcases the strength and professionalism of our submarine force, playing a critical role in sustaining a free and open Indo-Pacific,” said Capt. Neil Steinhagen, commander, Submarine Squadron 15. “The crew’s readiness, warfighting excellence, and dedication to the mission reflect our enduring commitment to regional security and embody their

motto, United for Freedom.”

During the deployment, Springfield conducted missions vital to national security, enhanced operational capabilities, reinforced deterrence across the Indo-Pacific, and made port visits to Sasebo and Okinawa, Japan.

“Whatever the mission demanded, this crew delivered,” said Cmdr. Greg Storer, commanding officer of USS Springfield. “Their resilience, precision, and teamwork ensured we remained operationally ready at every turn. I couldn’t be prouder—every Sailor’s contribution was essential to our success, and together they proved why our submarine force remains second to none.”

During the deployment, 31 Springfield Sailors advanced in rank and 19 earned their submarine warfare insignia—commonly known as “dolphins” or “fish.” The insignia signifies qualification to operate at the highest standards of the undersea force and reflects mastery of their watch stations and responsibilities.

“This deployment tested our crew in every way, and they answered the call,” said Master Chief Information Systems Technician (Communications) Chris Ries, Springfield’s chief of the boat. “They worked as one team, stayed steady under pressure, and showed exactly what makes our Sailors the strength of this submarine.”

Springfield’s return was marked by the Navy’s time-honored “first kiss” and “first hug” traditions, with Culinary Specialist (Submarine) 2nd Class Dimitri Rathke receiving the first kiss and Sonar Technician (Submarine) 1st Class Zachary Bergeron receiving the first hug.

Commissioned Jan. 9, 1993, USS Springfield is the fourth U.S. Navy ship to bear the name, honoring the cities of

Springfield, Illinois, and Springfield, Massachusetts. Assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron 15 at Polaris Point, Naval Base Guam, Springfield is one of five forward-deployed fast-attack submarines. Renowned for their speed, endurance, stealth, and mobility, fast-attack submarines are the backbone of the Navy's submarine force. Regarded as apex predators of the sea, Guam's fast-attack submarines serve at the tip of the spear, reaffirming the submarine force's forward-deployed presence in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sparton DeLeon Springs, LLC Receives Competitive Delivery Order for the U.S. Navy for the AN/SSQ-53H Sonobuoy

DELEON SPRINGS, FLORIDA – Aug. 28, 2025 – Sparton DeLeon Springs, LLC has been awarded a Firm Fixed Price Competitive Delivery Order under Fair Opportunities procedures for production of the AN/SSQ-53H for the United States Navy in support of annual training, peacetime operations and testing expenditures, as well as to maintain sufficient inventory to support the execution of major combat operations based on naval munitions requirements process.

Sparton President and CEO Donnelly Bohan said:

"The Sparton workforce prides itself on quickly responding to our customers' needs. Our portfolio of sophisticated sonobuoys, sensors, and undersea payload delivery systems equip our customers with the very best maritime solutions to be used for Anti-Submarine Warfare and Undersea Warfare

anywhere on the globe. This sizeable sonobuoy contract from the Air Anti-Submarine Warfare Systems Program Office signifies the U.S. Navy’s confidence in our solutions and we’re proud to deliver them.”

Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant Returns Home After Seizing 3,100 Pounds in Drugs

The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) poses for a photo with contraband seized or transferred aboard the cutter during a deployment in the Caribbean Sea, Aug. 16, 2025. Vigilant’s crew conducted a two-month, maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage and Caribbean Sea to protect America’s maritime borders and prevent illicit drug

smuggling in the region. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)
Release From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) returned home to Cape Canaveral, Aug. 19, following a 59-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea and Windward Passage.

During the patrol, Vigilant's crew interdicted 3,100 pounds of illicit drugs in the Caribbean Sea while underway in the Coast Guard Southeast District's area of operations. Vigilant's crew deployed in support of the Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) mission of detecting and monitoring illegal drug shipments in the maritime domain for subsequent interdiction and apprehension.

On July 25, a maritime patrol aircraft notified Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant's crew of a suspicious go-fast vessel approximately 180 miles south of the Dominican Republic. Vigilant's boarding team interdicted the vessel, seizing more than 1,410 pounds of cocaine and 80 pounds of marijuana.

On Aug 15, a maritime patrol aircraft notified Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant's crew of a suspicious go-fast vessel approximately 35 miles southwest of Haiti. Vigilant's boarding team interdicted the vessel, seizing more than 1,615 pounds of marijuana.

These drug seizures contributed toward the Coast Guard's largest drug offload in history. To read more about Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton's (WMSL 753) recent offload, visit: **Coast Guard achieves historic milestone with offload over 76,140 lbs. in illegal narcotics at Port Everglades > United States Coast Guard News > Press Releases**

Vigilant's crew initially deployed in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while on patrol in the Windward Passage, working alongside other Coast Guard assets to deter illegal alien migration along the coast of Haiti.

Crew members executed maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations while maintaining a continuous presence in the region. This mission is essential to deterring unsafe and unlawful migration ventures bound for the United States.

“I am incredibly proud of this crew’s dedication, performance and resilience during a challenging 59-day patrol in support of Coast Guard and national objectives to secure our maritime borders and safeguard lives at sea,” said Cmdr. Steven Welch, commanding officer of Vigilant. “Working closely with our Department of Defense and law enforcement partners, as well as multiple partner nations, we seized or disrupted over 3,100 pounds of illegal narcotics bound for the United States. Additionally, we safeguarded lives at sea by preventing dangerous and illegal migration attempts across the open ocean in unseaworthy vessels. We look forward to returning home to our families and friends and beginning the arduous process to prepare Vigilant and her crew for the next deployment.”

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination because 80% of drugs are interdicted on the high seas. U.S. Southern Command’s Joint Interagency Task Force – South based in Key West conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension.

OVS is a Department of Homeland Security-led operation comprised of federal, state and local partners responsible for preventing and responding to maritime migration. OVS, previously known as Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast, was established in 2003 and is comprised of more than 50 federal, state, and local agencies.

Vigilant is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are search and rescue, counter-drug operations, alien interdiction and enforcement of federal fishery laws.

Vigilant is an asset that falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Based in Portsmouth, Virginia, Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit GoCoastGuard.com to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found **here**.

Can the U.S. Navy's E-2D Hawkeye Substitute for the Canceled Air Force E-7A Wedgetail?

An E-2D Hawkeye attached to the "Greyhawks" of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 120 performs a touch-and-go landing aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77). *Photo credit: U.S Navy | Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Pierce Luck*

The U.S. Air Force's E-7A Wedgetail Airborne and Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft was canceled by the Trump Administration in the summer of 2025, although Congress is moving to block such a decision and enacting legislation to prevent the movement of funds out of the E-7A program.

Can its duties be undertaken by the U.S. Navy's smaller, cheaper E-2D Hawkeye?

"I'll leave that to the decision makers in the United States Air Force as to what the right thing is," Vice Admiral Daniel L. Cheever, commander of Naval Air Forces and Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, said during a Center for Strategic and International Studies' "Future of Naval Aviation" live webinar event on Aug. 26, in response to a question from *Seapower*.

“Is the E-2D one of the most capable command and control platforms out there? Yes, it is,” he said. “It has air refueling, so we can stay on station and go serious long ranges. And that team, very small team in the E-2D, is incredibly capable … the three folks in the back are incredible warfighters. Talk about folks that can think strategic, operational, and tactical all at the same time. I think of them as a large umbrella over the whole force, and command and control, and give you the right call at the right time.

“And I think about the trust … the implicit trust I have in the E-2D crew. If they say something and direct me, I do it,” said Cheever, an F/A-18 Hornet pilot. “I don’t pause. I don’t go `Is that the right decision?’ I do whatever they say whenever they say it because they’re always right. And they have that global essay situational awareness that the E-2D brings. And so, it’s kind of inherent [in] that trust piece.”

The E-7A program has been behind schedule and over budget. A single E-7A airborne battle management aircraft’s cost increased by $136 million, or 23%, from $588 million to $724 million. The E-7A is needed to replace the decades old and outdated E-3 Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). Both aircraft are manufactured by Boeing and both have aerial refueling capabilities.

The E-7A is already in foreign air forces’ service, flying for the Royal Australian Air Force, the Republic of Korea air force, and the Turkish air force. The E-7A production numbers are low, with 13 flying or in order with air forces around the world in 2025.

The U.S. Air Force has none, although it wanted 26 before the Pentagon canceled the program and concluded the E-2D Hawkeye can fulfill the AEW&C task, even though the turboprop-powered E-2D is much smaller and thus less capable in speed, range, and endurance. E-2Ds use a 360-degree rotating dorsal antenna

that can switch from mechanical to electronic scanning for detecting threats over land, water, and in the littorals.

The jet-powered E-7A is based on a larger Boeing 737 Next Generation (737-700) commercial jetliner and has more range and endurance because it doesn't have to take off from an aircraft carrier. E-7As use a Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) fixed to the top of the aircraft, which provides 360-degree long-distance detection and tracking of airborne and sea targets.

"As an interim solution, the U.S. military wants to grow the Navy's E-2D Hawkeye fleet to perform that mission while it builds a network of space-based sensors that can warn troops of enemy aircraft and missiles and help direct the movement of forces," according to an article in Air & Space Forces magazine. "Hawkeyes would supplement a diminished [E-3] AWACS fleet, about half of which have already retired with no alternative in place."

The Pentagon's fiscal 2026 budget request calls for $1.4 billion to buy more E-2s, Bryn Woollacott MacDonnell, the department's acting budget chief, told the magazine. It would also spend $150 million to create a joint expeditionary Hawkeye unit with five planes.

"The E-2D is in production and, as Admiral Cheever indicates, it's a very capable platform that can operate with both persistence and at range from areas of interest," Bradley Martin, a retired U.S. Navy captain and RAND Corporation's senior policy researcher, told *Seapower*.

"It could carry out missions for the joint force in an effective manner. The main advantage is that it's an aircraft in production with a capability for upgrades as new technology becomes available. This observation does not imply that RAND necessarily recommends the E-2D over the E-7A, just that E-2Ds could perform most of the missions the joint force requires."

Austal USA Launches First New Utility Landing Craft

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA launched the company's first Navy Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessel at its ship manufacturing facility in Mobile, Ala. on Aug. 22. LCU 1710 is the first of 12 Navy LCUs under contract at Austal USA, part of a $91.5 million contract awarded by the Navy in 2023. Austal USA has three LCU under construction.

"I am proud of the LCU program team for the hard work they've put forth to reach this important milestone," stated Michelle Kruger, Austal USA President. "LCU is an important program that plays a critical role in supporting expeditionary operations for the Navy and Marine Corps. Each milestone achieved shores up our position as a key contributor to the

strength and success of the maritime industrial base.”

LCU are carried aboard amphibious assault ships to the objective area and used across a range of military operations to deliver vehicles, personnel and cargo from sea-to-shore and back. These connectors provide a heavy-lift capability and can carry about the same payload capacity as several C-17 aircraft.

LCU is one of three shipbuilding programs in serial production at Austal USA’s facility. The company also has three Navy Navajo-class Towing, Salvage and Rescue ships (T-ATS) and two U.S. Coast Guard Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutters (OPC) under construction.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Ship to Shore Connector, Landing Craft, Air Cushion 114

By Team Ships Public Affairs, Aug. 29, 2025

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of Ship to Shore Connector, Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) 114, from Textron Systems, August 28.

Delivery of LCAC 114 follows completion of acceptance trials and represents the official transfer of the craft from the shipbuilder to the Navy. During acceptance trials, the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey tested the readiness and capability of the craft to effectively meet requirements.

This addition to the fleet enhances Navy's amphibious capability, providing a vital asset for rapid deployment and logistical support.

"The delivery of LCAC 114 reinforces the urgency needed to deliver amphibious capabilities to the Navy and Marine Corps team," said Angela Bonner, acting program manager for Amphibious Assault and Connectors Programs, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships.

The current LCAC is built with configurations, dimensions, and clearances similar to legacy LCACs—ensuring that it is fully compatible with existing well deck-equipped amphibious ships. LCACs can carry an approximate 60 to 75-ton payload and primarily transport weapon systems, equipment, cargo, and assault element personnel through a wide range of conditions, including over-the-beach.

Textron Systems is currently in serial production on LCACs 115-126.

PEO Ships, one of the Department of Defense's acquisition organizations, is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, and auxiliary ships, including special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk returns home to Key West, Florida after 75-day maritime border security patrol

Jamaica Defence Force Coast Guard patrol vessel HMJS George William Gordon and U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk (WMEC 913) conduct an at-sea transfer of contraband and suspected drug smugglers in the Caribbean Sea, Aug. 23, 2025. Mohawk's crew conducted a 75-day maritime border security patrol in the Caribbean Sea, Florida Straits and Caribbean Sea. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Andrew Ferderer)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Aug. 29, 2025

KEY WEST, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk (WMEC 913) returned to their home port in Key West, Friday,

following a 75-day maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage, Florida Straits and Caribbean Sea.

During the patrol, Mohawk's crew deployed to the Coast Guard Southeast District (CGD-SE) area of responsibility, where crews conducted multi-mission operations with joint service, international, and interagency partners to protect America's maritime borders from illegal drug trafficking and prevent unlawful alien migration in the region.

Mohawk's crew initially deployed in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while on patrol in the Windward Passage to deter illegal alien migration along the coast of Haiti.

On Aug. 16, Mohawk's crew assisted the Jamaica Defence Force by interdicting and transferring a vessel with five Haitians aboard who were attempting to illegally enter Jamaica.

The crew also patrolled the Caribbean Sea in support of the Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) mission of detecting and monitoring illegal drug shipments in the maritime domain for subsequent interdiction and apprehension.

On Aug. 21, a U.S. Navy aircrew identified a suspicious vessel in the Caribbean Sea, and a U.S. Coast Guard aircrew assisted in tracking the go-fast vessel with three suspected drug smugglers aboard. Once Mohawk was vectored in, crew members launched the cutter's primary interceptor boat, the service's newest 26-foot, Mk-V over-the-horizon cutter boat, for a 113-nautical-mile pursuit and later coordination with Jamaica Defence Force personnel, who interdicted the vessel in Jamaican waters.

In total, while working with the Jamaica Defence Force during four maritime law enforcement cases, Mohawk's crew interdicted or assisted in the interdiction or transfer of 13 suspected smugglers, two suspect vessels and seized marijuana to

Jamaican authorities for prosecution in Jamaica.

In addition, Mohawk worked alongside Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security partners, contributing to the disposition of 21 drug smugglers, 2,425 pounds of cocaine, and 4,300 pounds of marijuana with an estimated street value of nearly $23 million.

Throughout the deployment, Mohawk engaged in joint patrols and at-sea transfers with a variety of Coast Guard assets, including Coast Guard Cutter Spencer (WMEC 905), Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous (WMEC 627) and Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630).

Reinforcing interagency cooperation, Mohawk partnered with the crews of the USS Cole (DDG-67) and USS Jason Dunham (DDG-109), who provided maritime patrol aircraft support and facilitated a critical transfer of contraband and detainees. These operations support U.S. national objectives and a commitment to a coordinated, multi-faceted approach to deter illicit trafficking and bolster regional security.

Collaborating with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Mohawk's crew also provided offshore presence to support Coast Guard Sector Miami alongside additional Coast Guard air and surface assets to help prevent illegal immigration and drug smuggling, while augmenting search and rescue capability off the coast of Florida.

"Mohawk's recent operations demonstrate our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our nation's maritime approaches," said Cmdr. Taylor Kellogg, commanding officer of Mohawk. "Our efforts over the last 75 days have served as a deterrent to criminal organizations seeking to exploit our waterways and reinforce our dedication to a safe and secure maritime environment. I'm proud of our crew for their selfless service, teamwork and devotion to duty."

CGG-SE is responsible for Coast Guard activities throughout a

1.7 million square mile area including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, as well as 34 foreign nations and territories. Interdictions are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of CGD-SE, which is headquartered in Miami.

OVS is a Department of Homeland Security-led operation comprised of federal, state and local partners responsible for preventing and responding to maritime migration. OVS, previously known as Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast, was established in 2003 and is comprised of more than 50 federal, state and local agencies.

JIATF-S, in conjunction with partner nations, works to target, detect and monitor illicit drug trafficking within the joint operating area. The organization facilitates the interdiction and apprehension of illicit traffickers to dismantle transnational criminal organizations while reducing the flow of drugs to the public. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension.

Mohawk is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug and alien interdiction operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere. The cutter falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia.

For more information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit **GoCoastGuard.com** to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found **here**.

Undersea Technology is a Top Priority for National Security Leaders

From the Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium, Sept. 2, 2025

NEWPORT, R.I. – The Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium (UTIC) reinforced its role as a leader in undersea defense innovation at SENEDIA's 11th annual Defense Innovation Days. The national event attracted nearly 400 influential defense decisionmakers and innovators.

"UTIC was proud to serve once again as a platinum sponsor for this important conference, which creates valuable opportunities for our members to connect, collaborate and innovate," said Molly Donohue Magee, Chief Executive Officer of UTIC. "Our members displayed their cutting-edge technology that will provide solutions for future undersea challenges."

Government – Industry Collaboration

The sold-out event included panels and keynote speeches that touched upon the importance of government-industry collaboration and the need to move faster in the scaling of the technology that will maintain the United States' competitive advantage in undersea warfare.

"The battlespace is expanding from the seabed to space, in all oceans and seas across the globe. We must sustain our focus on the fleet needs to make certain our warfighters have the capabilities to dominate any fight, anywhere, any time," said Marie Bussiere, Technical Director at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Newport, as part of a panel discussion she moderated on undersea innovation. "To maintain the undersea advantage, we need to get solutions into the hands of the fleet faster."

Pathway to Procurement

UTIC manages the industry consortium for the U.S. Navy's Other Transaction Agreement (OTA), which provides members with the ability to rapidly research, test and prototype undersea and maritime technological innovations in support of Navy requirements.

Several speakers highlighted the U.S. Navy's increasing emphasis on the OTA as a tool for delivering the critical technology needed to enhance mission readiness.

"OTAs now make up 20% of the contracting portfolios spent at Division Newport, and that continues to increase. OTAs are now the first-look for contracting activities. We expect that there will be increased opportunities there," said Steve Lamb, Chief of the Contracting Office at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Newport.

Sponsorships

More than a dozen UTIC members served as sponsors of Defense Innovation Days, supporting the event and in turn, promoting meaningful undersea tech innovation.

- Comark – A Division of SourceCode
- General Dynamics
- Globe Composite Solutions
- Granite State Manufacturing
- L3Harris Technologies
- Leidos
- McLaughlin Research Corporation
- Northrup Grumman

- Rite-Solutions
- RTX Corporation
- SEACORP
- SERCO
- Teledyne Marine
- Vatn Systems

A Welcome New NATO Maritime Strategy

NATO Maritime Component Command, Northwood, U.K., symbol.

Image credit: NATO MARCOM

The latest Maritime Strategy document issued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO,) on 22 July 2025 is a welcome refreshing of NATO's commitments to confront aggression within and outside of Europe, and for the need to exercise sea control in that effort. Many knew a major change was coming. Gone are the days of vanilla statements on maritime security. The new NATO Maritime Strategy focuses on four vital interests: nuclear deterrence, sea control and maritime power projection, freedom of navigation, and protecting sea lanes and critical maritime infrastructure. These points closely parallel those of Admiral Stansfield Turner's "Missions of the U.S. Navy" document from 1974 and are a welcome return to great power rather than mere security strategy.

The document names as adversaries Russia and terrorism, and calls out China, Iran, and North Korean for challenging the security and prosperity of Alliance members. The document does not pose new means of organization or sourcing for the vital Standing NATO Maritime Groups that are the backbone of NATO maritime capacity day to day, and it does not talk about specific geographic threat areas. Climate change occupies a prominent role, but as the enabler of access to the contested Arctic, and not as a critique of national policies. The new Strategy also avoids a hyper-focus on NATO protecting sea lines of communication across the Atlantic, a European cultural phobia from the 20th century World Wars, but not a critical point of attack for the Soviet, or successor Russian naval forces.

Lots of New Good

The new maritime strategy sails aggressively into the future in ways its 2011 predecessor could only dream of when issued. Russia's specific threat to underwater maritime infrastructure, and especially that on the seabed is called

out as a threat for the Alliance to counter. The malign partnership of China and Russia, and their mutual efforts to undermine the existing maritime order is noted, as is the fact that while Russian land and air forces may be depleted from combat, Russia's maritime force, "retains significant capability and is upgrading its maritime forces and introducing new technologies, particularly in underwater reconnaissance and underwater warfare." Unmanned systems and hypersonic weapons are noted as emerging, disruptive technologies. Best of all, there is a renewed call to seize and retain sea control as part of Alliance maritime operations and to project power from the sea and provide a base of operations for Allied command and control.

Some Challenges

The new Maritime Strategy does have some points that the Alliance will be challenged to achieve. A 24/7, sea-based missile defense is a distant goal, outside what the United States Navy provides in terms of missile defense from *Arleigh Burke* class destroyers based in Rota, Spain as part of the 6th Fleet organization. European naval forces did not cover themselves in glory in recent Red Sea operations where German and Danish ships had technical challenges, the UK Royal Navy had intermittent presence, and other NATO nations abstained from anti-missile operations entirely. Those were legitimate political decisions and familiar points within an Alliance where so-called "national caveats" often take a ship(s) out of a coalition of the willing. Such moves, however, deprived some Alliance members of missile defense experience and could make that maritime strategy goal of 24/7 coverage hard to achieve. The new strategy does not discuss the reorganization of the Standing NATO Maritime groups (surface combatants SNMG and mine warfare forces SNMCMG) along geographic lines as some rumors in the bazaar suggested. Such changes would see a NATO Standing Maritime Group Baltic or Standing NATO Maritime Group Black Sea in place of the usual North/South division of NATO

maritime forces. Sustainment of the SNMG's was incredibly good at the outset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine but has fallen off in recent months. NATO is correct to say that the standing maritime groups are the backbone of NATO maritime capacity and really its only forces likely ready for a "fight tonight" in defense of Alliance member states. Getting a regular drumbeat of maritime group sustainment has always been an Alliance challenge in the post-Cold War period and it is hoped that NATO can yet achieve regular member state participation in maritime group sourcing.

Conclusion

The new June 2025 NATO Maritime strategy is a welcome return to the aggressive posture at sea NATO possessed during the late Cold War. The new document tick's multiple boxes that should be welcomed by the United States and by other democratic nations around the globe that regularly partner with NATO in both policy and operations. The new strategy could be more aggressive and talk about attacking the Russian maritime bastion in the Barents Sea rather than defending closer to alliance nations. It's certainly a more aggressive document than the new British Atlantic Bastion concept, and a favorable course change back on the strong warfighting track the Alliance last navigated in the 1980's.

Keel Authenticated for Future USS Wisconsin (SSBN 827)

GROTON, Conn. (Aug. 27, 2025) Dr. Kelly Geurts, ship sponsor of the future Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine USS Wisconsin (SSBN 827), welds her initials into the ship's keel during its keel-laying ceremony under the supervision of General Dynamics Electric Boat welder Robert Ray Jr. The future Wisconsin will be the second Columbia-class submarine, following the future USS District of Columbia (SSBN 826).
Release From Team Submarine Public Affairs, Aug. 28, 2025

GROTON, Conn. – The keel for the future USS Wisconsin (SSBN 827), a Columbia-class submarine, was laid during a ceremony on Aug. 27 at the General Dynamics Electric Boat Quonset Point facility in Kingstown, Rhode Island.

The keel laying ceremony signifies a major milestone in the life of a ship as it begins to transition from design to reality. The future Wisconsin will be the second Columbia-class submarine, following the future USS District of Columbia (SSBN 826).

"Our ballistic missile submarines are the most survivable leg of our nation's nuclear triad; they are the ultimate guarantee

that no adversary will ever miscalculate America's resolve," said Adm. William Houston, Director, Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, in his keynote remarks. "From this keel, the Wisconsin will rise—an intricate structure of power, precision, and purpose. And just as the keel bears the weight of the ship, this vessel bears the weight of our nation's most solemn responsibility: to deter war and preserve peace through strength."

Houston directly addressed the workforce charged with building this intricate submarine. "To our shipbuilders, engineers and suppliers: your craftsmanship makes this possible," said Houston. "You are laying not just a keel, but the foundation of security for generations to come."

The submarine's sponsor is Dr. Kelly Geurts, a retired educator and military spouse. Her husband, the Honorable James Geurts, is a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

This is the third Navy ship to bear the name Wisconsin. The original Wisconsin (BB-9), an Illinois-class pre-Dreadnought battleship, was commissioned in 1901 and served as the flagship of the Pacific fleet until 1903. In 1908 the ship joined the Atlantic fleet for the trans-pacific leg of the Great White Fleet and was decommissioned in 1920.

Wisconsin (BB-64), an Iowa-class battleship, was commissioned in April 1944. The ship served in combat in the Pacific, notably at the Philippines, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and the final bombardments in Japan. Wisconsin was decommissioned after World War II and was later recommissioned for the Korean War serving until 1958. The ship was recommissioned once more in 1988 to participate in the Persian Gulf War before being decommissioned a final time, in 1991. The ship now operates as a museum battleship at Nauticus Berthing in Norfolk, Virginia.

The keel laying of future USS Wisconsin (SSBN 827) symbolizes the Navy's 250-year commitment to innovation and maritime dominance. From seabed to space, the Navy delivers power for peace – always ready to fight and win. This milestone marks the Navy's enduring legacy and commitment to shaping the future of maritime power.

Columbia-class submarines will replace the U.S. Navy's Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines. The Navy's ballistic missile submarines, often referred to as "boomers," serve as an undetectable launch platform for submarine-launched ballistic missiles. They are designed specifically for stealth and to provide an ensured second-strike capability forming the backbone of the Nation's strategic deterrence strategy.

For more information about Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines visit: https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Fact-Files/Display-FactFiles/Article/2169580/fleet-ballistic-missile-submarines-ssbn/