

# At War With the Virus: Sea Services Forced to Radically Change Course to Battle the COVID-19 Outbreak



Sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt move meals ready to eat for Sailors who were negative for COVID-19 and asymptomatic at local hotels in an effort to implement social distancing and stop the spread of COVID-19. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Julio Rivera

The novel coronavirus has been a stunning and tragic disrupter of U.S. sea service operations – both major and routine, traditional events as well as long-planned operations.

Shortly after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, the effect on America's military started to come into sharper focus.

Check out the digital edition of the May Seapower magazine [here](#).

[See: At War With the Virus – A Timeline](#)

By April 16, the U.S. Navy had reported 1,224 novel coronavirus cases. Most of those, 983, were Sailors, including 655 from the USS Theodore Roosevelt – the ship that is the hot spot for the virus. Another 134 cases were civilians, 53 dependents and 54 contractors.

A total of 13 Sailors, 13 civilians, three dependents and six contractors had been hospitalized. Also by April 16, 200 had recovered, the Navy said.

On April 13, the Navy said that the first active-duty Sailor had died – a Roosevelt crew member – joining three civilian employees and two Navy contractors who perished.



Sailors transport a patient to the hospital ship USNS Mercy. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan M. Breden

As of April 16, the U.S. Marine Corps reported 340 COVID-19 positives among uniformed Marines, dependants, civilians and

contractors.

The U.S. Coast Guard had 90 cases but 31 had recovered by that date.

Also by April 15, the hospital ship Mercy, docked in L.A., had seven test positive and sent into isolation. More than 100 had been in contact with those who tested positive there.

### **Spotlight on the Teddy Roosevelt**

By mid-April, four aircraft carriers – the cornerstone of the Navy's ability to project power forward – had at least one Sailor on board test positive for the viral infection. The USS Nimitz and USS Carl Vinson, both based in Bremerton, Washington, and the USS Ronald Reagan in Japan all were in port when their COVID-19 cases were discovered.

But nowhere was the outbreak more acute or visible to the world than on the fourth aircraft carrier, the Theodore Roosevelt, which put into port at Guam. That carrier became the first ship at sea to report a case.



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Kimberly Wyss dons surgical gloves aboard the hospital ship USNS Mercy, which is deployed to Los Angeles in support of the nation's COVID-19 response efforts and serves as a referral hospital for non-COVID-19 patients admitted to L.A.-area hospitals. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan M. Breeden

The then-captain of the Theodore Roosevelt, Brett Crozier, who later tested positive and went into quarantine himself, drew attention to his Sailors' plight with a March 30 letter to Navy leadership. The letter was leaked and ran the next day with a story in the San Francisco Chronicle, drawing worldwide media attention.

As outcry grew over the fate of the Roosevelt's crew, then-acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly announced April 2 the removal of Crozier from his command. Modly then flew to Guam, where he would compound the controversy in a speech to the crew that included profanity-laced criticism of Crozier. The speech stirred more criticism of the Navy and Modly, who submitted his resignation on April 7.

By April 15, it was reported that Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, after preliminary findings from a follow-on report of the affair, was considering reinstating Crozier.

As of April 16, 94% of the Theodore Roosevelt's crew had been tested; 3,919 were negative with the 655 positives. Five were hospitalized in Guam, with one in intensive care. Of the 4,800 crew, 4,059 Sailors had moved ashore.



Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, security department Sailors direct incoming gate traffic to COVID-19 screening stations on base. U.S. Navy/Taylor Curry

### **Concern for the Submarine Fleet**

Of special concern is the health of the ballistic missile submarine force – the maritime leg of the nuclear triad with bombers and ground-based missiles – and other subs.

Crew members were undergoing enhanced medical screenings and 14-day isolation before beginning training or deployment aboard a sub, Gilday announced on March 24.

As of press time for Seapower in mid-April, no cases had been reported within the submarine force, but the Navy and all other services, starting in late March, were not reporting COVID-19 cases broken down by specific sectors of the fleet to protect operational security.

### **Wargame Foreshadows a Real Pandemic**

Three months before the outbreak was detected in China, 50 experts participated in a wargame, Urban Outbreak 2019, that simulated the rapid spread of a disease.

The scenario involved a nation of 21 million people hit by a virus that led to respiratory failure and death.

The wargame generated a debate among “players” over the need for mass-enforced quarantine, like the U.S. population faces today. The players split between those who espoused quarantine as a reality and those who believed it would drive the infection underground and spread the disease faster.

The game’s results were scheduled to be discussed at a workshop in March, but like so many events in and out of the military these days, the real-life COVID-19 risk forced officials to postpone the workshop until at least this summer.

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**Geurts: Third Zumwalt DDG Will Be Commissioned After**

# Combat Systems Activation



The USS Lyndon B. Johnson is made ready before flooding of the dry dock at General Dynamic-Bath Iron Works shipyard and subsequent launching of the third Zumwalt-class destroyer in 2018. U.S. Navy via General Dynamics-Bath Iron Works  
ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy’s third Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer will be commissioned after its combat systems are fully installed and activated, rather than going through a two-part delivery, the Navy’s top acquisition official said.

The future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002), under construction at the Bath Iron Works shipyard in Bath, Maine, will not be commissioned until after its combat systems are installed, unlike the process used for its two predecessors, USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000) and Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001), said James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, speaking to reporters in an April 28 teleconference.

In the case of the first two of the class, the ships' hulls were completed and put through trials and then delivered to the Navy before their combat systems were installed. The Zumwalt was commissioned – in a status the Navy calls In Commission, Special – in Baltimore and then proceeded to San Diego for installation and activation of its combat systems. It was delivered to the Navy on April 24 and will begin at-sea testing of its systems preparing for its initial operational test and evaluation and its 2021 initial operational capability milestone.

The USS Michael Monsoor similarly was commissioned on Jan. 26, 2019, and proceeded to San Diego for its combat systems installation, which was completed in March.

The Lyndon B. Johnson is 93% complete, Geurts said, but will not be delivered and commissioned until its combat systems are installed. Since the combat systems activation will be conducted in San Diego, it will need to proceed there in a status other than as a commissioned ship.

“We did change to a single-phased delivery for that ship, and so we are adjusting that ship’s future plans based on all the learning we’ve had on DDG 1000 and DDG 1001,” Geurts said.

“I’m personally not a fan of two-phased delivery,” he said. “I can understand why we do them. In certain cases, I think they’re also problematic because you end up delivering the ship more than once and you can get into a delayed test-maintain-fix cycle.”

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# **CACI to Support U.S. Navy Satellite Systems, Networks for Special Operations**

ARLINGTON, Va. – CACI International has been awarded contract to provide communications systems, satellite communications and network-support services to the Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Atlantic in support of U.S. Special Operations Command, the company said in a release.

The award is a five-year and six-month (if all options are exercised), single-award indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract, with a ceiling value of \$199 million.

Under the contract, CACI engineers and technicians will provide mission expertise, including fielding and training for operational systems, maintenance, logistics and 24/7 technical support for personnel working with the satellite and network systems. CACI will support about 2,000 satellite communications systems worldwide, as well as wide-area network infrastructure services for nearly 90 sites.

CACI has a modern facility designed to support and enhance NIWC's mission. CACI experts can maintain, assemble and test satellite communications systems at the Fayetteville, North Carolina, facility.

"This re-compete award results from the long-standing professional and productive relationship between our dedicated team and NIWC, focused on providing service members with the critical communications support they need to execute their mission," said John Mengucci, CACI's president and CEO.

CACI Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Board J.P. (Jack) London said, "As our country continues to face evolving national security threats, CACI remains focused on providing

the support our customers rely on to safeguard our nation.”

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## **Leonardo DRS to Provide U.S. Navy Advanced Combat Networking Hardware**

ARLINGTON, Va. – Leonardo DRS has received a contract from the U.S. Navy to produce advanced consoles and display systems to support the Navy’s future surface ship combat system, the company said in a release. The contract is worth more than \$62 million with options that could be worth up to \$462 million.

The Leonardo DRS Naval Electronics business unit will provide a suite of Common Display System (CDS) consoles, thin client displays, multimission displays, and support equipment. The CDS consoles are a set of open-architecture watch station display consoles made up of two different console variants: water-cooled and air-cooled. The common display hardware provides the interface between the Sailor and the ship’s combat systems.

“Building these advanced systems gives U.S. Navy sailors the latest in combat networking hardware and provides mission-critical fleet modernization and readiness requirements today and into the future,” said Tracy Howard, senior vice president and general manager of the Leonardo Naval Electronics unit.

The Common Display System consoles are the next generation of hardware infrastructure representing the latest technology available on the market. Leonardo DRS has a history of producing advanced hardware for all Navy surface and subsurface platforms for use in combat systems, tactical

networks, processing and machinery control.

Work will be performed at the Leonardo DRS Naval Electronics facility in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

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## **Navy Provides Medical Care to Infected Sailors of USS Kidd, Will Disinfect Ship**



Operations Specialist 2nd Class Yves Permelona (left) and Operations Specialist 2nd Class June Canuel practice plotting courses during training aboard the USS Kidd, which is headed to San Diego for medical care for crew members and cleaning and disinfecting of the ship. Several Sailors

there have tested positive for COVID-19. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brandie Nuzzi  
SAN DIEGO – As part of the U.S. Navy’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak on board the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd, the ship was to arrive at Naval Base San Diego on April 28 for medical care for its Sailors and for cleaning and disinfecting of the ship, according to Naval Surface Forces public affairs.

“Sailors have called San Diego home for many years, and we’re especially thankful for that relationship now,” said Vice Adm. Richard Brown, commander of Naval Surface Forces. “Taking care of our Sailors and cleaning this ship is a team effort, and we’re fortunate that the partnership between the Navy and the city of San Diego is allowing us to focus on that mission.”

[See: Decision on Crozier’s Fate Next in the Hands of Pentagon Officials](#)

[See: Military Consumers React to Life During Pandemic](#)

USS Kidd was at sea participating in counter-narcotics operations in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility when several of its Sailors began exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

One Sailor was evacuated to the U.S. on April 22 after experiencing shortness of breath. The commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet redirected the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island – with its medical facility, including an intensive care unit, ventilators and additional testing capability – to rendezvous with the Kidd.

*“Taking care of our Sailors and cleaning this ship is a team effort, and we’re fortunate that the partnership between the Navy and the city of San Diego is allowing us to focus on that mission.”*

*Vice Adm. Richard Brown, commander of Naval Surface Forces*

On April 23, eight medical personnel arrived on board the Kidd with equipment to begin testing the crew for COVID-19. As of April 25, 33 Sailors there had tested positive for the virus, the Navy reported.

The Kidd's executive officer, Cmdr. Matt Noland, released a letter via social media to friends and family on April 24. In it, Noland wrote, "The Navy pulled out all the stops – specialist doctors have already arrived from the United States to test and help care for our shipmates."

As Navy leadership solidified plans to return the ship to port, Sailors who warranted closer observation were transported from the Kidd to the Makin Island out of caution. An additional Sailor was medically evacuated to the United States. Meanwhile, the ship's crew began intensive cleaning efforts while still underway.



The amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island and its medical facilities and testing capabilities were diverted from routine operations in the eastern Pacific to rendezvous with the USS

Kidd. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob D. Bergh

All Sailors will be isolated off the ship with twice-daily medical screenings. Crew members who have tested negative will quarantine for a period of observation, to include daily visits from military health professionals.

A small contingent of Sailors who have tested negative will remain on the ship for essential services and deep cleaning. These Sailors will be outfitted with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and will maintain social distancing, in accordance with U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

“San Diego may not be USS Kidd’s home port, but we are definitely being made to feel at home,” said Cmdr. Nathan Wemett, commanding officer of the Naval Station Everett, Washington-based ship. “I am personally grateful to know that we have such a strong bond with our Navy communities. It’s the strength of those bonds that helps us work together in challenging situations.”

While in San Diego, the Kidd will undergo a deep cleaning that balances decontamination with preventing damage to the ship’s systems. The cleaning process begins with spaces being vacated for seven days – four days longer than the minimum recommended by the CDC. The ship will be cleansed room-by-room, with access to each space restricted. The process is expected to take about two weeks, at which time Sailors who are confirmed to be healthy will return to the Kidd and Sailors moving off the ship will go into isolation.

The Navy is providing a resiliency counselor, team of chaplains and psychologist for Sailors in isolation and quarantine. The Navy has also established a 24-hour roving patrol to ensure that Sailors who are sequestered off the ship are adhering to all public health and safety policies, the Navy said.

USS Kidd Sailors have been told to immediately report any flu-like symptoms – a lesson learned from the USS Theodore Roosevelt and its Sailors, all of whom are now housed in Guam.

As of April 25, the entire crew of the Roosevelt had been tested for the virus, with 833 total positive and 4,105 negative results, the Navy reported. A small number of results were pending. Of the total cases, 112 Sailors have recovered and 4,273 Sailors have moved ashore, the Navy said.

Also, as of April 25, two assigned to the Roosevelt were in U.S. Naval Hospital Guam under treatment for COVID-19 symptoms. One Sailor from the Roosevelt died there earlier this month from complications of the infection, the Navy reported.

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## **Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane Returns Home After Caribbean Patrol**



The crew of the cutter Harriet Lane conducts a vertical replenishment evolution with an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aircrew during their patrol in the Caribbean. U.S. Coast Guard/Ensign Camisha Moore

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane returned to its homeport of Portsmouth, Virginia, on April 26 following a 71-day patrol of the central Caribbean, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a release.

The cutter's multimission patrol resulted in the interdiction of 1,306 pounds of marijuana, with a street value of over \$2.3 million. Harriet Lane conducted its patrol in support of the Coast Guard's 7th District and the United States Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force South.

The Harriet Lane crew started their patrol with flight operations off the coast of Miami for a biannual aviation assessment. Working with a helicopter from Air Station Miami, the Harriet Lane completed a series of day and night flight

operations, including vertical replenishment, in-flight refueling and landing evolutions.

Soon after, Harriet Lane joined forces with the Honduran Navy Special Forces to conduct a joint law enforcement patrol off the coast of Honduras. This engagement provided the opportunity for law enforcement subject matter expert exchanges and improved interoperability between the two nations for future counter-narcotic operations.

The Harriet Lane continued into to the central Caribbean to combat the smuggling of illegal narcotics across the region. During their time there, the cutter's crew worked with a maritime patrol aircraft to interdict a go-fast style vessel off the coast of Jamaica. The Harriet Lane arrived on scene, with the crew seizing 1,306 pounds of marijuana from the vessel and its jettison field and detaining four suspected drug traffickers.

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## **Navy Accepts Delivery of Destroyer USS Delbert D. Black**



Donny Dorsey (right), Ingalls' DDG 119 ship program manager, Cmdr. Matthew McKenna (center), the Delbert D. Black's prospective commanding officer, and Peter T. Christman III, DDG 51 Project Office, SUPSHIP Gulf Coast, practice social distancing while signing the transfer of custody of the ship to the Navy on April 24 at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Huntington Ingalls Industries PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of the guided missile destroyer Delbert D. Black from Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls shipbuilding division on April 24, the Navy's Program Executive Office (PEO)–Ships said in a release.

Accepting delivery of the Delbert D. Black represents the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder to the Navy. Prior to delivery, the ship successfully conducted a series of at-sea and pier-side trials to demonstrate its material and operational readiness.

The 68th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer honors Delbert D. Black, the first master chief petty officer of the Navy, and

will be the first naval ship to bear his name. Black is known for guiding the Navy through the Vietnam War and ensuring enlisted leadership was properly represented Navy-wide by initiating the master chief program.

“The DDG 51 shipbuilding program and Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Gulf Coast are proud to accept delivery of Delbert D. Black on behalf of the Navy and look forward to her commissioning later this year,” said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51 class program manager for PE0-Ships. “Ingalls has delivered another highly capable platform that will sail from our shores and help protect the nation for decades to come.”

The DDG 51 class ships currently being constructed are Aegis Baseline 9 Integrated Air and Missile Defense destroyers with increased computing power and radar upgrades that improve detection and reaction capabilities against modern air warfare and ballistic missile defense threats.

In addition to Delbert D. Black, HII’s Pascagoula shipyard also is in production on the future destroyers Frank E. Peterson Jr. and Lenah H. Sutcliffe Higbee as well as the Flight III ships, Jack H. Lucas and Ted Stevens.

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## **Navy Takes Delivery of Final Block II Super Hornet, Looks Ahead to Block III**



A Block II F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Mediterranean Sea on April 5. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Rebekah Watkins

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy took delivery of the final Block II Super Hornet, closing out a run of 322 one-seater F/A-18Es and 286 two-seated F/A-18Fs, on April 17, the Navy's Program Executive Office-Tactical Aircraft said in a release.

Since 2005, F/A-18 Super Hornet Block II aircraft have been rolling off Boeing's production line and serving as the Navy's multimission capable workhorse.

"Aircraft E322 will leave Boeing's production line and head straight to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34 based in [Naval Air Station] Oceana," said Cmdr. Tyler Tennille, of the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), who oversees acceptance testing.

"When the Super Hornets first came online, they were a game-changer," he said, pointing to the Block II's Active Electronically Scanned Array radar as well as larger displays, upgraded sensors and avionics and increased range and

capability to employ an arsenal of precision weapons that delivered advanced lethality and mission flexibility for the service.

The airframe was built with an open mission systems architecture, which has enabled easy integration of new weapons and technologies. The Block II Super Hornet serves as the Navy's responsive aircraft, capable across the full mission spectrum, including air superiority, fighter escort, reconnaissance, aerial refueling, close air support, air defense suppression and day/night precision strike.

This aircraft been the backbone of the Navy's carrier air wing and has proven itself repeatedly during numerous operations where it has been the pre-eminent platform performing multiple missions, sometimes rapidly reconfiguring on the fly.

Even though it is substantially larger – about 7,000 pounds heavier and a 50% higher range, the Super Hornet delivered with fewer parts and lower maintenance demands than its predecessor, the Hornet.

“Delivery of this last production Block II Super Hornet is hardly the end of an era, but rather a stepping stone along the path to continuously evolving our platforms to meet the Navy's ever-evolving needs,” said Capt. Jason Denney, program manager of the F/A-18 and EA-18 Program Office.

Following the delivery of these aircraft, Tennille said he expects the transition from Block IIs to Block IIIs to be seamless.

The capabilities and successes of the Block II program were leveraged by the Navy in awarding a multiyear procurement contract for Block III Super Hornets to Boeing in March 2019, totaling about \$4 billion. The Navy will procure 72 Block III Super Hornets between fiscal years 2019 and 2021.

Boeing is expected to deliver the Block III test jets to the Navy as early as late spring, where subsequent testing will commence at both Naval Air Station Patuxent River and Naval Air Weapons System China Lake. This latest version of the Super Hornet includes an advanced cockpit system, advanced network infrastructure, reduced radar cross-section and a 10,000-flight hour lifespan.

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## Navy Accepts Delivery of Next-Gen Destroyer



Capt. Scott Carroll, commander of Zumwalt Squadron One, delivers remarks during the establishment ceremony of Surface Development Squadron ONE last May. U.S. Navy/Mass

Communication Specialist 1st Class Woody S. Paschall  
SAN DIEGO – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of the USS Zumwalt, the lead ship of the Navy's next generation of multimission surface combatants, on April 24, Program Executive Office (PEO)-Ships said in a release.

Following this delivery, the ship will transition from combat systems activation to the next phase of developmental and integrated at-sea testing.

This event also marks a milestone of the dual delivery approach for the Zumwalt (DDG 1000), which achieved hull, mechanical and electrical delivery from shipbuilder General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works (BIW) in May 2016.

Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems was the prime contractor for the Zumwalt combat system and has lead activation and integration for Zumwalt-class ships both in Bath, Maine, and San Diego.

"Delivery is an important milestone for the Navy, as DDG 1000 continues more advanced at-sea testing of the Zumwalt combat system," said Capt. Kevin Smith, DDG 1000 program manager for PEO-Ships.

"The combat test team, consisting of the DDG 1000 sailors, Raytheon engineers and Navy field-activity teams, have worked diligently to get USS Zumwalt ready for more complex, multimission at-sea testing. I am excited to begin demonstrating the performance of this incredible ship."

*"Delivery is an important milestone for the Navy, as DDG 1000 continues more advanced at-sea testing of the Zumwalt combat system."*

*Capt. Kevin Smith, DDG 1000 program manager, PEO-Ships*

With delivery, USS Zumwalt joins the U.S. Pacific Fleet battle

force and remains assigned to Surface Development Squadron One. In addition to at-sea testing of the Zumwalt combat system, DDG 1000 also will operate as an enabler in the acceleration of new warfighting capabilities and rapid development and validation of operational tactics, techniques and procedures.

The 610-foot, wave-piercing tumblehome ship design provides a wide array of advancements. Employing the Integrated Power System (IPS), DDG 1000 has the capacity to distribute 1000 volts of direct current across the ships' entirety, allowing for enhanced power capability for various operational requirements. Additionally, the shape of the superstructure and the arrangement of its antennas significantly reduce radar cross section, making the ship less visible to enemy radars.

"Every day the ship is at sea, the officers and crew learn more about her capability, and can immediately inform the continued development of tactics, techniques, and procedures to not only integrate Zumwalt into the fleet, but to advance the Navy's understanding of operations with a stealth destroyer," said Capt. Andrew Carlson, the ship's commanding officer.

"After sailing over 9,000 miles and 100 days at sea in 2019, we are absolutely looking forward to more aggressive at-sea testing and validation of the combat systems leading to achievement of initial operational capability."

The USS Zumwalt is the first ship of the Zumwalt-class destroyers. The USS Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001) is homeported in San Diego and is undergoing combat systems activation. The third and final ship of the class, the future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002), is under construction at BIW's shipyard in Bath.



The USS Zumwalt arrives at its new homeport in San Diego in December 2016. U.S. Navy/Petty Officer 3rd Class Emiline L. M. Senn

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## **Military Consumers React to Life During Pandemic**



NEX Pearl Harbor launched its Quarantine Support Program by taking orders and delivering goods to military members on restriction of movement orders and quarantined in rooms on Joint Reserve Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. U.S. Navy/NEXCOM Public Affairs

The COVID-19 crisis has cut back on time spent shopping for food and necessities, changing some military and dependent shopping habits and causing sales of some items – both essential and nonessential – to jump.

Kristine Sturkie, a spokesperson for the Navy Exchange Service Command, said the U.S. Navy Exchanges haven't seen a rush to stockpile items, although there are limits on some essential items such as toilet paper, hand sanitizers and some cleaning products, so that more customers have access to these needed products. Sturkie said the stores have seen an increase in sales of personal items such as hair clippers.

NEX associates are accepting requests and delivering orders to

military patrons who are in a restricted movement status or confined to quarters while under quarantine.

Since fewer people are commuting to work or venturing out, gasoline sales are down, as they are for civilians. Sturkie said the number of gallons sold at Navy Exchange gas stations was down about 21% worldwide compared to last year, and although the data is not available yet for April, she expects gallon purchases to be down for the month as well.

“Laptop and home office supply sales have spiked with more people teleworking, along with light fitness equipment to support home workouts,” Sturkie said. “Sales of outdoor items like bubbles, sidewalk chalk, basketballs and footballs and games, coloring books and playing cards are trending with the kids spending more time at home as well as home-organization and home-improvement type products.”

*“Laptop and home office supply sales have spiked with more people teleworking, along with light fitness equipment to support home workouts.”*

*Kristine Sturkie, Navy Exchange Service Command spokesperson*

Even though people are at home, many are conducting business in Zoom and other online platform meetings, where they must look presentable. As salons are closed, the health-and-beauty aids industry is seeing a sharp increase in the sale of do-it-yourself hair coloring products.

While online shopping has been strong, many more consumers are resorting to the web as a last resort. Online retailers like Amazon have seen dramatic increases in sales of both food and non-food items. While the nation is seeing huge unemployment numbers, parcel delivery companies like UPS and FedEx are hiring.

John Blythe, the Defense Commissary Activity Fort Belvoir

store director, said there are no food shortages, but the commissary is having some challenges in replenishing merchandise from manufacturers during the novel coronavirus crisis.

The commissary stores sell military Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MRE) year-round and for camping, hunting and for use in the event of adverse weather like blizzards or hurricanes. With the COVID-19 crisis, Blythe said some customers are worried and purchasing MREs at a higher rate than normal. Large pallets of MREs by the case are on display immediately as you enter the Fort Belvoir Commissary.



NEX Bahrain Distribution Center associates prepare NEX Quarantine Support Program orders for a portside delivery to a ship in port at Naval Support Activity Bahrain. U.S. Navy/NEXCOM Public Affairs

“In speaking with customers, many are concerned with food shortages and purchasing them for home use or shipping them to

family members who are serving overseas,” Blythe said. “MRE sales usually peak in the summer months but we have never had such a demand for them as we had in the past 30 to 45 days.”

Hugo Ostreng of the Norwegian company DryTech, which makes Arctic rations for NATO forces, camping and backpacking as well as survival meals, said his company has seen an increase in the number of orders from both civilian as well as military customers. DryTech is a manufacturer of freeze-dried meals and as well an assembler of food rations for field applications for the military and outdoor markets.

“DryTech saw a sudden increase in the sale of freeze-dried meals for the civilian market,” said Jan Trondsen, key account manager for military sales.

“Many households thought it was a good idea to build up a little more food on stock in their own houses. We also had an increase in the orders to units and institutions because the system of distributing food from buffets and serving lines is not currently permitted. Our products proved very useful as they can be prepared, distributed and consumed without a kitchen or food-service personnel.”

Jessica Davis of Patagonia Provisions said sales of the company’s shelf-stable food products have seen a large spike. Backpacking food is usually expensive, but Davis said people are willing to pay a premium for lightweight, healthy, easy-to-prepare meals that are nutritious and taste good, especially after a long day of outdoor activities.

“Our customer base is expanding due to COVID-19 with folks filling their pantries in preparation for what’s ahead. But our existing customers are also coming back and placing larger-than-normal orders. Our supply chain and distribution system are healthy and equipped to handle the increased demand,” Davis said.

“We’ve been selling a lot of selling a lot of buffalo jerky,

soups and chilis, seafood and the gift boxes. High-protein freeze-dried meals last a long time and you can live off them, so people are stocking the pantry. Patagonia Provisions is certainly feeling those effects.”