

# Marine Corps Adds KC-130J Squadron to Support Marine Littoral Regiment



A U.S. Marine Corps KC-130J aircraft assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 prepares to land on Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Jan. 6, 2023. Jan. 6, 2023. VMGR-153 will formally activate as a KC-130 squadron of Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, on Jan. 13, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Chandler Stacy)

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ARLINGTON, Va. – A new Marine Corps squadron has been activated in Hawaii to enhance mobility of the Corps' first Marine littoral regiment. Marine Aerial Refueler/Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153) was activated at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, in a Jan. 13 ceremony. The

squadron is equipped with Lockheed Martin KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport aircraft.

The activation of VMGR-153 is one enactment of Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David H. Berger's Force Design 2030 concept, which is re-aligning the Corps to conduct expeditionary advance base operations inside an adversary's weapon engagement zone. The Corps is activating three self-deployable, multi-domain Marine littoral regiments (MLRs) to conduct such operations, the first of which – the 3rd MLR – was activated last March. The 12th MLR will be activated this year in Okinawa, Japan.

VMGR-153 brings to four the number of active-component VMGR squadrons in the Corps, three of which – including the new squadron – are positioned to support Marine Forces Pacific, the other two being VMGR-152, based at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, and VMGR-352, based at MCAS Miramar, California. The fourth squadron, VMGR-252, is based at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina.

Until last month, the Marine Corps Reserve also fielded two KC-130J squadrons. VMGR-452 was de-activated Dec. 2 at Stewart Air National Guard Base in New York. Remaining is VMGR-234 at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas.

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## **Marine Corps Activated Marine Corps Information Command**



Marine Maj. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage, Commander of Marine Forces Cyber, speaks at the uncasing of the flag of the Marine Corps Information Command, in a ceremony held at Ft. George G. Meade on 13 January, 2023. The MCIC is comprised of a Headquarters, the Marine Cryptologic Office, and two Major Subordinate Commands; the Marine Corps Information Operations Center and Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion.

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

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FORT MEADE, Md. – The U.S. States Marine Corps continues operationalizing the Marine Corps' seventh warfighting function, information, by activating a service retained, two-star command poised to synchronize, coordinate, and integrate capabilities across the Fleet Marine Force, Jan. 17, said Ryan Lowcher of Marine Corps Forces Cyber Command.

Commanded by Maj. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage, the current commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Space Command, the Corps' newest unit will integrate,

synchronize, and enable information activities that deter adversaries and set conditions for the Fleet Marine Force across the range of military operations.

“The activation of the MCIC is all about warfighting, integration and enabling the Joint Force to meet our national security objectives,” said Lt. Gen. Brian Cavanaugh, the commanding general of Marine Corps Forces Command.

Serving as the primary integrator of information-related capabilities that support Service and Fleet Marine Force requirements with seamless coordination, the Marine Corps Information Command will also encompass units previously assigned to the deputy commandant for Information including the Marine Corps Information Operations Center, the Marine Corps Cryptologic Support Battalion, and the Marine Corps Cryptologic office.

Heritage added, “A single commander who can leverage the authorities and approvals needed to synchronize global cyber, space, influence, and intelligence effects creates unity of support for the FMF and generates information advantages in support of commander’s objectives.”

The Marine Corps Information Command will now serve as the linkage across the commands that conduct operational level planning and will enable the commander to provide task organized detachments leveraging authorities across the range of military operations and in support of campaigning objectives.

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# Muslim Civil Rights Group Protests Name 'Fallujah' for U.S. Navy Ship



The amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) sails with the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during a photo exercise in the Philippine Sea, Sept. 17, 2022. The future USS Fallujah (LHA 9) will be similar to these ships but equipped with a well deck. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Christopher Lape*

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Muslim civil rights group is protesting the U.S. Navy's selection of the name "Fallujah" as the name of a future amphibious assault ship.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), self-described as the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, "called on the U.S. Navy to change the name of the future America-class amphibious assault ship 'USS Fallujah,'" in a Dec. 15 press release.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Dec. 14 that a

future America-class amphibious assault ship, LHA 9, will be named USS Fallujah. The ship “will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War. The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S. sailing ships or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II,” the Navy release said.

The First Battle of Fallujah occurred in April 2004 in an effort to capture or kill insurgents responsible for the killing of four U.S. contractors, according to the Navy Department release. The Second Battle of Fallujah, fought between Nov. 7 and Dec. 23, 2004, was a major U.S. led offensive to retake control of the city from insurgents and foreign fighters. With over 100 coalition forces killed and over 600 wounded, Operation Phantom Fury is considered the bloodiest engagement of the Iraq War and the fiercest urban combat involving U.S. Marines since the Vietnam War’s Battle of Hue City.

CAIR has a different regard for the battles.

“The two battles fought in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004, were the bloodiest fighting of the Iraq War. [Hundreds of civilians – including women and children – were killed](#) during the battles,” CAIR said in the release. “To this day, the civilian population is reportedly being negatively impacted by the weapons used in those battles.”

“Just as our nation would never name a ship the ‘USS Abu Ghraib,’ the Navy should not name a vessel after notorious battles in Fallujah that left hundreds of civilians dead, and countless children suffering from birth defects for years afterward,” said CAIR National Deputy Director Edward Ahmed Mitchell, in the CAIR release. “There must be a better name for this ship – one that does not evoke horrific scenes from an illegal and unjust war.”

The secretary of the Navy selected the name of the battles “to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah. This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the LHA’s unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage and commitment to freedom displayed by those who fought in the battle.”

“Under extraordinary odds, the Marines prevailed against a determined enemy who enjoyed all the advantages of defending in an urban area,” said Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger, in the announcement. “The Battle of Fallujah is, and will remain, imprinted in the minds of all Marines and serves as a reminder to our Nation, and its foes, why our Marines call themselves the world’s finest.”

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## **SECNAV Names Future America-class Amphibious Assault Ship Fallujah**



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WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro announced Dec. 13 that a future America-class amphibious assault ship will be named USS Fallujah (LHA 9).

The future USS Fallujah will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War. The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S. sailing ships or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II.

“It is an honor to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah,” said Del Toro. “This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the LHA’s unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage and commitment to freedom displayed by

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“Under extraordinary odds, the Marines prevailed against a determined enemy who enjoyed all the advantages of defending in an urban area,” said Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger. “The Battle of Fallujah is, and will remain, imprinted in the minds of all Marines and serves as a reminder to our Nation, and its foes, why our Marines call themselves the world’s finest.”

Along with the ship’s name, Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS Fallujah as Mrs. Donna Berger, who, in her role, will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

Donna Berger is not only the spouse of Gen. David H. Berger, 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, but also an avid advocate and mentor for military families.

America-class amphibious assault ships are designed to support Marine Corps Operational Maneuver From the Sea and Ship to Objective Maneuvers. The America-class ships replaced all of the decommissioned Tarawa-class LHAs and are now optimized for aviation ability, accommodating the Marine Corps’ future Air Combat Element while adding additional aviation maintenance capabilities and increasing fuel capacities and extra cargo storage. With the unique inherent powers of the amphibious

assault ships, they are often called upon to also support humanitarian and other contingency missions upon short notice.

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## HII Hosts Marine Corps Commandant at Ingalls Shipbuilding



Gen. David H. Berger, the 38th commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, walks the grounds of the HII Ingalls shipyard, meeting leadership, including Ingalls president Kari Wilkinson. *HII* PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division hosted Gen. David H. Berger, the 38th commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, on Dec. 12, the company said in a release. Berger met with Ingalls leadership and toured the shipyard, including two amphibious ships currently under construction, Bougainville (LHA 8) and Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29).

"We value the opportunity to showcase our talented shipbuilders and state-of-the-art facility to the Marine Corps and Navy," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. "It's a great day when our customers see first-hand the work we are completing to support their service, and when we can hear directly from them on requirements."

As the sole builder of the entire San Antonio class of ships, Ingalls has delivered 12 San Antonio-class ships to the Navy and has three more under construction, including Richard M. McCool (LPD 29), Harrisburg (LPD 30) the first Flight II LPD and Pittsburgh (LPD 31). The shipyard is also building large-deck amphibious ships for the Navy and Marine Corps, delivering a total of 15 ships (Tarawa class, LHA 1-5; Wasp class, LHD 1-8; and most recently America class, LHA 6 and LHA 7). The large-deck amphibious ship production line remains online and efficient with the ongoing construction of Bougainville (LHA 8) and LHA 9.

"It's always a good day when you get to see amphibious warships being built," said Gen. Berger, commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. "Amphibious ships are critical for the Marine Corps' ability to modernize for a potential near-peer fight while we still perform our daily crisis response missions around the globe – we need amphibs for all our missions."

Ingalls has designed, built and maintained amphibious ships, destroyers and cutters for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard for nearly 85 years. Recently, nearly \$1 billion was invested in the infrastructure, facility and toolsets at Ingalls enabling shipbuilders, improving product flow and process efficiency, and enhancing product quality. Ingalls is supported by over 700 suppliers across 49 states. As the largest supplier of U.S. Navy surface combatants, Ingalls is simultaneously building four classes of ships and has pioneered the development and production of technologically advanced, highly capable ships for the surface

Navy fleet for decades.

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# Textron Systems Delivers Its Cottonmouth Purpose-Built Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle to Marine Corps



The U.S. Marine Corps' Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle at the Nevada Automotive Test Center, Oct. 2022. *TEXTRON SYSTEMS*  
HUNT VALLEY, Md. – Textron Systems Corporation, a Textron Inc. company, announced Dec. 8 the delivery of Cottonmouth, a vehicle purpose-built for the U.S. Marine Corps' Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) program. The hand-off of the prototype vehicle occurred Dec. 1, 2022, at the Nevada

Automotive Test Center (NATC) in Silver Springs, Nevada.

Created to serve as a Naval Sensor Node supporting expeditionary operations, the Cottonmouth vehicle provides lightweight multi-modal capability for the Marines, consistent with the service's Force Design 2030 vision. A multi-domain command and control suite integrated into the vehicle as part of the C4UAS Mission Role Variant allows it to coordinate data and serve as the quarterback, or battlefield manager, for the modern battlefield. The amphibious 6x6 platform is equipped for sustained reconnaissance with organic unmanned systems capabilities and multi-spectrum sensors which provide seamless communication between the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

The Cottonmouth vehicle's smaller footprint allows rapid transport of four vehicles on a Ship-to-Shore Connector (LCAC 100). Supporting the mission of a mobile scout vehicle, the easy-to-deploy platform swims in open ocean and navigates littoral water obstacles such as bays, estuaries, rivers, light surf and handles any terrain.

"Our Cottonmouth vehicle is a completely clean-sheet design that provides transformative reconnaissance capabilities and meets Marine Corps requirements," said David Phillips, senior vice president, Land and Sea Systems. "The vehicle was designed from its inception by listening to customer requirements. Because of its smaller size, the Marines can quickly deploy next generational combat power to the fight and lets commanders meet any mission anywhere."

The prototype is the second iteration of the vehicle informed by lessons learned from an original Alpha prototype vehicle and approximately 3,000 miles of testing. Textron Systems' Cottonmouth vehicle has completed contractor verification testing of its mobility, swim capability, avionics integration and C4UAS mission capabilities. In addition to delivery of the fully integrated ARV platform, the company also delivered a blast hull to the Aberdeen Test Center and a

systems integration lab to the Naval Information Warfare Center-Atlantic, both of which have been undergoing government evaluation and testing. The prototype vehicle now enters its formal government evaluation phase, expected to last through 2023.

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## **SECDEF Announces Marine Corps General Officer Nominations**

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced on Dec. 6 that the president has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Marcus B. Annibale for appointment to the grade of major general. Annibale is currently serving as director, Expeditionary Warfare (N95), Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Lorna M. Mahlock for appointment to the grade of major general. Mahlock is currently serving as deputy director of Cybersecurity for Combat Support, National Security Agency, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Matos III for appointment to the grade of major general. Matos is currently serving as deputy commanding general, U.S. Marine Forces Cyber; and deputy commander, Joint Task Force-Ares, Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. David L. Odom for appointment to the grade of major general. Odom is currently serving as deputy director for Current and Integrated Operations, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Thomas B. Savage for appointment to the grade of major general. Savage is currently serving as deputy director for Operations, U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. William H. Swan for appointment to the grade of major general. Swan is currently serving as deputy director for Operations, National Joint Operations/Intelligence Center, Team 3, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Brian N. Wolford for appointment to the grade of major general. Wolford is currently serving as commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea, Camp Humphreys, Korea.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Calvert L. Worth Jr. for appointment to the grade of major general. Worth is currently serving as commanding general, 2nd Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

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**Marine Corps General:  
Strategic Overseas Bases  
Critical to Detering  
Adversaries**



U.S. Marines with the Maritime Raid Force, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, tread water during a limited scale raid on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 21, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Manuel Alvarado*

WASHINGTON – The commanding general of the U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory and Futures Directorate says overseas bases are an underestimated key to deterring competitors from aggression and coercion against friendly nations and allies in the Pacific region.

The value of strategic basing “deserves more attention in any discussions of deterrence,” Brigadier Gen. Kyle B. Ellison told the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI)’s Defense Forum at the Spy Museum Dec. 6. Overseas bases are “one of the most critical aspects of the deterrence effort, in my opinion,” said Ellison, who is also vice chief of Naval Research in the Office of Naval Research.

Speakers at the USNI event focused on integrated deterrence, one of three ways cited by the 2022 National Defense Strategy to achieve Defense Department goals that include defending the

homeland against the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Integrated deterrence seeks to bring a whole of government approach across services, government agencies, regions, commands and Ally or partner organizations to thwarting competitors' aggression.

The other paths to attaining Defense goals are through campaigning and building enduring advantage.

"While we modernize our power projection capabilities, we must not lose focus on broadening our stance in the Pacific or hardening our forward installations," Ellison said. "The value of our overseas bases cannot be overstated and our investment in the resilience of these overseas locations will have a far-reaching impact on our ability deter."

Another aspect of integrated deterrence is a stand-in force operating inside a weapons engagement zone, a point that emerged from the Marines' Force Design 2030 plan. While China has increased the challenges of anti-access/aerial denial over the mainland and created stand-off areas and protective bubbles in the littorals, Ellison said U.S. Allies and partner stand-in forces "will survive in this high threat environment" because they are "nimble, moving often and avoiding enemy intelligence collection efforts."

The stand-in force could include, not just Marines, but elements of the Navy, special operations, Allies and partner nations. To support the consistent persistence of the stand-in force, Ellison said the Marines were reducing their sustainment burdens and maximizing maneuverability by "reducing logistics demands across the life cycle of the stand-in forces. This will give them a position of strength and advantage in coordination with Allies and partners."

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# Marine Corps Adds Cherry Point Squadron to F-35B Operators



A U.S. Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 542 flies over Bodo, Norway during Fjord Fury, June 6, 2018. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Jailine L. Martinez*  
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corp is converting another AV-8B Harrier II attack squadron to F-35B Lightning II strike fighters, the first F-3B fleet squadron to be based on the East Coast.

Marine Attack Squadron 542 (VMA-542) – the Tigers – was re-designated Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 542 (VMFA-542) in ceremonies held at the squadron's base at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, as it retires its last Harriers in favor of the Lightning II. The squadron is scheduled to be operational with its F-35Bs by next summer.

VMA-542's last detachment of Harriers deployed to the Baltic Sea in 2022 on board USS Kearsarge and operated for a period from Estonia in during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

With the transition of VMFA-542, the only two AV-8B squadrons, VMA-223 and VMA-231, both based at Cherry Point, will remain flying in the Marine Corps. The last AV-8Bs are scheduled for retirement in fiscal 2027.

VMA-542 activated in March 1942 during World War as Marine Night Fighter Squadron 542 and flew its F6F-3N Hellcats in combat in the Pacific, including the Battle of Okinawa. In 1948, the squadron was re-designated Marine All-Weather Fighter Squadron 542 and was equipped with F7F-3N/4N Tigercat fighters, which the squadron flew in the Korean War. In 1951, the squadron returned to the United States for transition to the F3D-2 Skyknight jet night fighter. In 1958 the squadron switched to the F4D-1 Skyray fighter.

In 1963, the squadron was redesignated VMFA-542 as it upgraded to the F-4B Phantom II. From July 15 until January 1970, the Tigers flew combat missions over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The squadron was de-activated on June 30, 1970, but re-activated on Jan. 12, 1972, as the second AV-8A Harrier squadron. In May 1986, the Tigers completed transition to the AV-8B Harrier II.

With the Harrier II, VMA-542 participated in combat operations such as Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Southwest Asia, Operation Noble Anvil in Kosovo, Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya, Operation Odyssey Lightning in Libya, Operation Inherent Resolve in Afghanistan, as well as deployments in support of multiple Marine Expeditionary Units, according to [1st Lt. Hudson Sadler](#) of the [2nd Marine Aircraft Wing](#).

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## **II MEF Marines Deploy On Board USNS Trenton in the Mediterranean Sea**



U.S. Marines assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force board the Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) in Koper, Slovenia, Nov. 16, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Sgt. Scott Jenkins*

KOPER, Slovenia – Approximately 50 U.S. Marines from II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF), based out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, embarked on Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (MSCEURAF)/Commander Task Force 63 (CTF-63) expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) for a one-month deployment, Nov. 17, said 1st Lt. Jasmine Scott of II MEF.

Their mission exercises II MEF's ability to rapidly deploy Marines into the European theater aboard an expeditionary fast transport ship. This event is one way II MEF exercises its flexibility and commitment to the European theater, ability to embark on board non-standard platforms, and operate in a maritime environment filled with island chains and choke points.

"This deployment is an example of the many opportunities II MEF Marines have to travel the world, experience different cultures, and train and build camaraderie with fellow service members from our partner nations," said Maj. Joshua Ramirez.

The majority of the Marine force comes from 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2d Marine Logistics Group, and 8th Communication Battalion, II MEF Information Group. These two units are deploying combat engineering and communication specialists, respectively. This detachment of Marines will visit several Mediterranean Allies where they will train to improve their unit-level readiness and military-to-military cooperation.

This agile force showcases the dynamic nature of U.S. military presence, while fostering our naval integration and exercise planning capabilities. II MEF deployed forces can scale up in

size or composite with other naval, joint or allied forces.

“We are very excited to have the II MEF aboard,” said Trenton’s Officer in Charge Cmdr. Timothy Rustico. “This deployment is a perfect way to demonstrate our ship’s unique transport capabilities and interoperability with the movement of Marines and their equipment.”

Trenton is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) area of operations, employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet to defend U.S., allied and partner interests.