

HII, MetalCraft Marine Deliver Autonomous USV Prototypes for U.S. Marine Corps



From HII

MCLEAN, Va., May 15, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII), in partnership with MetalCraft Marine, has delivered and sea tested two unmanned surface vessels (USV) awarded in a Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) contract for smaller form factor autonomous boat prototypes for the U.S. Marine Corps.

The two ROMULUS-25 autonomous USVs were delivered in December 2025 and supported successful testing and demonstration of advanced autonomous mission behaviors at sea.

“Successfully delivering on this prototype contract with the Defense Innovation Unit and the U.S. Marine Corps is a strong

recognition of HII's deep experience and the maturity of our proven autonomous technologies," said Andy Green, executive vice president of HII and president of HII's Mission Technologies division. "The ROMULUS-25, powered by our Odyssey autonomy suite, builds on thousands of hours of successful at-sea operations and demonstrates how scalable, AI-enabled unmanned systems can extend the reach, endurance, and effectiveness of naval forces."

The ROMULUS-25 is a 27-foot high-speed interceptor vessel designed to deliver up to 1,000 pounds of payload with a range of up to 1,000 nautical miles. Fully capable of autonomous operation, the vessel is powered by HII's Odyssey AI-based autonomy system, which integrates multiple sensors and effectors to enable coordinated, cross-domain maritime operations in support of the U.S. Marine Corps, as well as U.S. and allied navies.

Over the past five years, Odyssey autonomy has been validated through more than 2,200 hours of autonomous operations during government-led tests and exercises.

Odyssey autonomy has been deployed on more than 30 platforms, accumulating over 12,000 hours of successful at-sea operations. Its modular open systems architecture (MOSA), service-based design enables integration with the HII Minotaur targeting network, enhancing mission-level operations and edge capabilities through AI-based contact recognition and identification.

The ROMULUS-25 is part of HII's broader family of USVs, which range from 7-foot micro-USVs to the ROMULUS-190, a 190-foot aluminum USV capable of carrying multiple containerized payloads.

The successful execution of this award represents one of several ongoing commitments by HII and MetalCraft Marine to advance hybrid manned-unmanned fleet capabilities and enable

next-generation autonomous operations in support of naval missions worldwide.

U.S. Marine Corps Strengthens Arctic Readiness with Campaign – Alaska

From Communications Directorate, Headquarters Marine Corps, May 9, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States Marine Corps has launched “Campaign – Alaska,” a strategic initiative to enhance its operational capabilities in the Arctic. This campaign combines two key efforts: the Marine Rotational Force – Alaska (MRF – Alaska) and the establishment of a Supporting Arms Liaison Team – Alaska (SALT – Alaska). These initiatives will address the Arctic’s growing strategic importance in an era of global competition and ensure the Marine Corps is prepared for the extreme conditions of the High North.

The 2026 National Defense Strategy prioritizes key terrain in the Western Hemisphere from the Arctic to South America as vital for homeland defense and strategic competition.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric Smith, stated that “the Arctic is a region of growing strategic importance. The Marine Corps must be prepared to operate and win in its extreme conditions. MRF – Alaska and SALT – Alaska are critical to ensuring our Marines are forward postured, trained and equipped to project power globally, reaffirming our commitment as the Nation’s expeditionary force in readiness.”

MRF – Alaska, under the direction of Marine Forces Northern Command (MARFORNORTH), will conduct persistent, multi-domain expeditionary training and experimentation in Alaska. By participating in Joint exercises like Arctic Edge and Red Flag, MRF – Alaska will provide a training venue to prepare the Fleet Marine Force for operating in arctic conditions. This will not only bolster homeland defense but also improve interoperability with Joint and allied forces, deter adversaries, and promote regional stability.

“In this era of strategic competition, Alaska is critical to homeland defense and a vital theater for global power projection in the Arctic,” said Lt. Gen. Bobbi Shea, Commanding General, Marine Forces Northern Command. “The Marine Corps Campaign – Alaska is a deliberate and necessary step to ensure we provide the Joint Force with a combat-credible force to support the National Defense Strategy.”

Complementing the rotational force, Marine Corps Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) is establishing SALT – Alaska, a permanent detachment of the 6th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). This builds on MARFORRES’ long-standing presence in Alaska, dating back to 1985. The SALT – Alaska detachment will be instrumental in expanding training and operational activities and will facilitate coordination with Joint Forces, allies and local communities. By fiscal year 2027, SALT – Alaska will provide a persistent Marine Corps presence in Alaska, ensuring continuity in Arctic operations and positioning the force for rapid expansion when needed.

Campaign – Alaska is a deliberate, forward-thinking strategy to meet the challenges and opportunities of the Arctic. By combining persistent rotational training with a permanent liaison capability, the Marine Corps is creating a robust Arctic presence. This will enable the Corps to project power, defend the homeland, and deter adversaries in one of the world’s most demanding environments.

Lt. Gen. Shea stated, “Alaska will only grow in strategic importance. The Marine Corps is committed to ensuring we are prepared to operate in the High North.”

Bell to Provide Bell 505 Airframe for U.S. Marine Corps’ MARV-EL Program



Bell Textron will provide its Bell 505 airframe for the U.S. Marine Corps’ MARV-EL uncrewed logistics aircraft program. *Photo credit: Bell Textron*

Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. company, announced it was selected by Near Earth Autonomy (Near Earth) as a partner on the prototyping of an autonomous Bell 505 for the U.S. Marine Corps’ Aerial Resupply Vehicle – Expeditionary Logistics (MARV-EL) Increment 2 program.

The goal of the program is to prototype an uncrewed logistics

aircraft ready for tactical-edge resupply in contested environments and serve as a middle-weight uncrewed logistics asset.

“This platform will be a step forward in transforming the U.S. Marine Corps’ autonomous operations and how our warfighters navigate on the battlefield,” said Jason Hurst, Bell SVP, Engineering. “We’re leveraging our decades of experience with the U.S. Armed Forces and innovative product development applying it to the versatile Bell 505 for this program.”

The awarded contract will deliver an autonomous aerial logistics capability that exceeds MARV-EL performance threshold requirements and accommodates a wide range of payloads and standard containers. Bell will provide engineering support to the Near Earth team on modifications to the Bell 505 for autonomy integration and enhanced cargo handling.

“Bell looks forward to continuing to build upon our relationship and prior autonomy development with Near Earth in support of the MARV-EL program,” added Hurst.

In 2024, Bell [revealed its Aircraft Laboratory for Future Autonomy \(ALFA\) platform](#) – a step forward in its autonomous flight efforts. Bell and Near Earth collaborated to integrate an advanced perception system for flight demonstrations on the ALFA aircraft, working towards fully autonomous flight capability.

Commandant Gives an Update on

Marines Future



Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith discusses the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps. (Credit: Laura Hatcher)

By Vicky Uhland, *Seapower* Correspondent

Marines don't win wars; they win battles, said General Eric Smith, commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, during the Tuesday afternoon session "250 Years Strong – Building the Marine Corps of Tomorrow."

"If you're looking for a chain-mail fist, you're looking at the U.S. Army," he said. "If you're looking to get popped in the nose, you're looking at the Marine Corps."

Smith outlined how the Marines are evolving with the changing character of war. The amphibious ready group remains the crown jewel of the expeditionary force, he said, and is currently deploying a three-ship Marine expeditionary unit – one from the East Coast, one from the West Coast and one from Japan.

“We could use 5.5 MEUs, but we are committed to an unwavering goal of a 3.0 MEU presence,” he said.

Smith said the Marines are also optimizing maintenance schedules to get more out of ships, are targeting investments in service-life extensions and are moving forward with procurement of new, more capable ships.

“Our current investment of 31 amphibious ships is not adequate,” he said, noting that the 2027 defense budget is a significant down payment on a generational investment in ships, but more money is needed.

Another area of emphasis is littoral mobility, mainly in the Indo-Pacific, which Smith called the world’s most challenging environment due to scale and size.

Smith said the Marines are also bolstering their logistics network.

“For decades, we operated with uncontested logistics, but the days of being three steps away from an MRE” or other supplies are over, he said. “As the maritime environment becomes less permissive, the global positioning network comes in.”

Smith said another challenge that “worries me greatly right now” is sufficient magazine depth, which can give commanders freedom of action and reduce operational risk.

Smith also highlighted current areas of achievement, including a clean financial audit for the third year in a row, the only service agency to do so. Barracks 2030 is delivering modern, safe and comfortable living conditions for Marines, and the Marine Corps Total Fitness program is helping make warriors physically, mentally, spiritually and socially resilient, he said.

Smith also answered some audience questions, including:

What can industry do to improve Marine resilience?

“Keep on budget. Don’t sell me what I don’t need. Give me what I’m asking for at a price I can afford,” Smith said.

What in-house innovations are impressing you?

The Drone Dominance task force in Quantico is doing an amazing job with drone technology, Smith said. “We’re still too expensive and haven’t learned all the lessons of Ukraine, but we’re getting faster and faster.”

Bundle Buy a Welcome Investment, AWIBC Says



A CH-53E Super Stallion assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163 (Reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, hovers over the flight deck of San Antonio-class

amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland (LPD 27), during flight operations in the Pacific Ocean, April 10, 2026. CREDIT: U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Luke Rodriguez

The Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition (AWIBC) is a trade coalition of suppliers of systems, components, parts, and services toward the construction and sustainment of the U.S. Navy's amphibious warfare ships. Recently, Paul Roden, chair of the AWIBC, responded to questions below from Senior Editor Richard R. Burgess.

Has AWIBC membership increased or decreased over the last year?

RODEN: The Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition is a robust and growing organization. We continue to see strong interest from suppliers who recognize the importance of a unified voice in advocating for the stability of our nation's defense industrial base that supports the men and women of our Navy and Marine Corps.

Is the amphibious warship industrial base in better or worse shape than last year?

RODEN: We are incredibly grateful for recent funding in support of amphibious warships, including the multi-ship buy for LPD 33, LPD 34 and LPD 35 as well as LHA 10. However, our most recent survey data shows that less than 10% of our suppliers are operating at full capacity due to inconsistent demand signals. As this new funding is placed on contract, it will help rejuvenate production lines and inject much-needed stability into the industrial base.

With all of the efforts to shore up the shipbuilding workforce, how healthy is the workforce of the suppliers?

RODEN: The most critical factor in the health of the industrial base workforce is stable and predictable funding. Our survey data shows a direct link between inconsistent demand and the challenge of maintaining a skilled workforce.

With a clear and consistent demand signal from the government, we can unlock the full capacity of a domestic industrial base that is 100% committed to delivering the ships our warfighters need.

How did the well-funded reconciliation law affect the amphibious warfare ship suppliers?

RODEN: The funding for the bundle buy was a significant and welcome investment. That funding is helping to rejuvenate idle production lines and inject much-needed stability across the amphibious warship industrial base. More than 50% of suppliers agree that the multi-ship buy has added predictability, helping plan for on-time deliveries. It was a crucial investment for the suppliers in our coalition and we are grateful for that support.

Are you seeing any improvements in amphibious warfare ship construction schedule stability?

RODEN: While the recent funding was a significant and welcome commitment, true schedule stability can only come from consistent and predictable funding through multi-year appropriations. To the extent that many of our suppliers support new construction across both amphibious ships and other critical naval assets, stable funding benefits the entire shipbuilding industrial base committed to delivering America's maritime dominance.

Secretary of War Announces

Marine General, Navy Flag Officer Nominations



From the Department of War, April 15, 2026

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced that President Donald J. Trump has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Roger B. Turner Jr. for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific and commanding general, Fleet

Marine Force Pacific, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. Turner is currently serving as commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force and commander, Marine Forces Japan, Okinawa, Japan.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Keith D. Reventlow for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as director for Logistics, J-4, Joint Staff, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Reventlow is currently serving as commanding general, Marine Corps Logistics Command, Albany, Georgia.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. George B. Rowell IV for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. Rowell is currently serving as director, J-5, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Thomas B. Savage for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commandant, Training and Education, and commanding general, Training and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia. Savage is currently serving as commanding general, 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, California.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. James B. Wellons for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Wellons is currently serving as special projects officer to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Peter D. Houtz for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Houtz is currently serving as assistant judge advocate general of the Navy, Office of the Judge Advocate General, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Navy Vice Adm. John F. Wade for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as senior military assistant to

the Secretary of War, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Wade is currently serving as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California.

Navy Rear Adm. Douglas L. Williams, for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as director for Strategic Systems Programs, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. Williams is currently serving as director for Test, Missile Defense Agency, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Airbus and Lakota Connector Partners Successfully Execute Fourth Autonomous Flight Test

WASHINGTON (April 15, 2026)—Airbus U.S. Space & Defense, in partnership with Shield AI, L3Harris Technologies (NYSE: LHX), and Parry Labs, completed its fourth autonomous flight test on the H145 Airbus helicopter and successfully integrated all four company's technologies into a single aircraft together for the first time.

The test flights, which took place at the Airbus facility in Grand Prairie, Texas, focused on refining the aircraft's perception system to ensure it provides accurate, real-time information to an autonomous pilot ensuring obstacles are avoided within a landing zone.

"This test was vital for us to show the Lakota Connector's development in performing aerial logistics missions for the U.S. Marine Corps,"

said Rob Geckle, Chairman and CEO of Airbus U.S. Space and Defense. "Perception systems can make or break the success of

an unmanned mission in the field, and I am excited to see our aircraft perform so well under uncertain conditions.”

During the tests, each partner’s contribution enabled the H145 aircraft to autonomously evaluate a landing zone, detect any obstacles obstructing it, and reroute to an alternate site as needed.

“L3Harris is delivering the digital backbone that advances autonomous aviation from concept to combat-ready capability,” said Jason Lambert, President, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, L3Harris. “Our Modular Open System Architecture enabled this team to integrate four partner technologies seamlessly, demonstrating the speed and interoperability that will define the future of unmanned logistics for the Marine Corps.”

Shield AI’s Hivemind demonstrated its core capabilities and autonomous perception of the aircraft.

“This H145 flight test proves Hivemind delivers scalable autonomy across rotary and fixed-wing aircraft without custom redesign,” said Christian Gutierrez, vice president of Hivemind Solutions at Shield AI. “That speed and flexibility are critical in contested logistics.”

Parry Labs provided edge compute and autonomy-enabling software infrastructure supporting onboard perception processing and real-time decision-making.

“Autonomy only works when perception and mission software operate together at the edge,” said Parry Labs CEO John “JD” Parkes. “This flight test showed how partner technologies can be rapidly integrated to deliver real-world operational capabilities.”

Airbus U.S. is currently in the second year of the Aerial Logistics Connector Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) Rapid Prototyping Program, which aims to provide the service

with aircraft prototypes to demonstrate capabilities to the warfighter through a series of operational demonstrations and experiments.

In May 2024, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) awarded Airbus U.S. Space & Defense a Phase I Other Transaction Authority (OTA) through the Naval Aviation Systems Consortium, based on its unmanned UH-72 Logistics Connector concept, a variant of the proven UH-72 Lakota platform.

The Aerial Logistics Connector effort is one of several initiatives across the Department of Defense aimed at delivering logistical support in distributed environments during peer or near-peer conflicts.

Philippine, U.S. Forces Kick Off Most Expansive Balikatan Exercise to Date



From the I Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military will conduct the 41st iteration of Exercise Balikatan across the Philippine archipelago from April 20 to May 8.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, more than 17,000 personnel from the Philippines, United States, Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and New Zealand will train shoulder-to-shoulder, and an additional 17 nations will participate as part of the international observer program.

“Balikatan is the embodiment of our nation’s commitment to a strong and credible defense posture” said Philippine Army Maj. Gen. Francisco F. Lorenzo Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines Education and Training Command Commander. “This exercise is a prime opportunity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to accelerate our modernization and enhance our capabilities as a vanguard of regional peace. Training shoulder-to-shoulder with our oldest ally and our many partners ensures our forces are prepared to face any challenge, together.”

The exercise will feature cutting-edge training across the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains. Key events include:

- AFP and U.S. forces will sharpen their ability to command and control by establishing parallel exercise joint task forces to navigate a challenging training scenario.

- Field training exercises throughout the Philippines will culminate in capstone events to rehearse warfighting skills in maritime security, coastal defense, and the integration of combined and joint fires.

- Dynamic maritime sustainment and distributed logistics through ship-to-shore equipment offloads and movements. Prior to the start of Balikatan 2026, the AFP and U.S. forces rehearsed equipment and supply offload from maritime prepositioning force shipping at Port of Cagayan de Oro that was transported and distributed across Luzon. Supplies and equipment movement and distribution will continue throughout the exercise in support of the training.

- Ships from four countries will participate in a multi-day multilateral maritime exercise along the west coast of the Philippines conducting deck landing qualifications, live-fire gunnery, anti-submarine warfare, and search and rescue training.

- Humanitarian and civic assistance activities including engineering and construction projects and community health engagements at five locations across the archipelago to directly benefit Filipino communities and

strengthen humanitarian assistance preparedness.

“Our alliance with the Philippines has been a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific for 75 years,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Christian Wortman, I Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General. “Balikatan 2026 is a powerful demonstration of our ironclad commitment to that alliance. By training together with our friends and partners using the most advanced systems, we are not just enhancing our shared capabilities; we are forging the trust and readiness required to secure a prosperous and peaceful future for the region.”

HII Hosts PAE Maritime Christopher Miller at Ingalls Shipbuilding



From HII

PASCAGOULA, Miss., April 09, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII) hosted Christopher Miller, the U.S. Navy's portfolio acquisition executive for maritime (PAE Maritime), at its Ingalls Shipbuilding division Wednesday. During the visit, Miller met with company leadership and received updates on current ship programs, facility investments and Ingalls' expanding production capacity to support the Navy's current and future fleet requirements.

"Ingalls is fully committed to our partnership with the Navy and the Marine Corps and our shared mission to strengthen the fleet with urgency," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Blanchette said. "The skill and determination our shipbuilders apply to every destroyer and amphibious ship are essential to that mission, and we were honored to show Mr. Miller firsthand the commitment they bring to accelerating the Navy's needs."

HII has invested more than \$1 billion in infrastructure, facilities and advanced tools at Ingalls to prepare for next-generation shipbuilding requirements. These investments, combined with the shipyard's expanding distributed shipbuilding network across the Gulf Coast, ensure Ingalls is ready to support the Navy's "Golden Fleet" of advanced surface combatants while continuing to deliver destroyers and amphibious assault ships.

The visit marked Miller's first trip to Ingalls since assuming the PAE Maritime role in March 2026. In addition to meeting with leadership, he toured several areas of the shipyard, including amphibious transport dock *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), currently under construction.

"The critical work happening at Ingalls reflects the strength and technical expertise of our nation's shipbuilding industrial base," Miller said. "As the Navy prepares for future demands, our industry partners and their experienced

workforce are pivotal to delivering the platforms and capacity needed. The maritime industry is critically important to our national defense and I am committed to supporting the industrial base efforts needed to deliver at speed and scale.”

Miller also visited HII’s Newport News Shipbuilding division at the end of March, where he met with leadership and toured construction progress on aircraft carrier programs at the shipyard. Together, the visits reinforced the shared commitment between HII and Navy leadership to deliver the platforms that strengthen the fleet, advance future capability and ensure sailors and Marines have the ships they need.

U.S. Strengthens Maritime Security Cooperation with Kenya During NAVAF Commander’s Visit



Adm. George Wikoff, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, and Major General Paul Otieno, commander, Kenya Navy, take part in the Close Quarters Battle (CQB) Facility Inauguration ceremony, on Kenya Navy Base Mtongwe in Mombasa. (U.S. Navy Photo by MC1Robert J. Baldock)
From By U.S. Naval Force Europe, U.S. Naval Forces Africa, March 31, 2026

U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) strengthened its longstanding security partnership with Kenya during Adm. George Wikoff's visit to Nairobi and Mombasa, March 24–25.

The visit, Wikoff's first to Africa as the NAVAF commander, highlighted the United States Navy's ongoing support to Kenya's maritime operations, counterterrorism efforts, and regional security leadership along the Western Indian Ocean and the Somali border.

Throughout his engagements, Wikoff underscored the shared U.S.–Kenya commitment to enhancing interoperability, expanding

partner capacity, and investing in infrastructure and training that enable Kenyan forces to deter and respond to emerging threats.

“Kenya is a critical maritime and security partner in East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean,” said Wikoff. “Our cooperation is built on shared interests and shared sacrifices, and together we are working to promote stability, protect vital sea lanes, and counter those who threaten regional security.”

In Nairobi, Wikoff met with the Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), General Charles Muriu Kahariri, to discuss ongoing collaboration in counterterrorism, maritime security, regional stability, and long-term defense modernization and innovation.

The discussion focused on aligning defense cooperation with broader U.S. diplomatic and economic goals, reinforcing strategic coordination at the senior level, and advancing Kenya’s role as a security anchor in the region.

“General Kahariri and I reaffirmed that our defense cooperation is not just a one-time effort – it is strategic, ongoing, and aligned with our broader diplomatic and economic partnerships,” Wikoff said. “Together, we are focused on countering terrorism, strengthening maritime security, and modernizing our forces so we are ready for current and future challenges.”

In Mombasa, Wikoff met with Major General Paul Owuor Otieno, commander of the Kenya Navy, to review ongoing maritime initiatives, including joint training, information sharing, and efforts to improve maritime domain awareness across the Western Indian Ocean. The leaders discussed ways to bolster Kenya’s ability to secure its maritime approaches, counter illicit maritime activities, and further integrate Kenyan naval forces into regional and international security

efforts.

Wikoff and Otieno then attended the after-action review for Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) 2026, a series of naval exercises with African partners, including Kenya, to bolster maritime security, improve interoperability, and address regional security challenges in the Western Indian Ocean. The review assessed operational effectiveness and interoperability gains and identified lessons to guide future joint exercises and operations.

“CARAT 2026 shows what we can achieve when we train and operate together,” Wikoff said. “By integrating our capabilities and sharing information, we are better prepared to secure the maritime domain, disrupt illicit networks, and respond swiftly when threats emerge.”

Wikoff and Otieno concluded their visit by commissioning the Kenya Navy Marine Range and Close Quarters Battle (CQB) Complex at Kenya Navy Base Mtongwe in Mombasa County. The new facility will provide a modern, specialized training environment to significantly enhance the operational readiness of the Kenya Navy Marine Commandos, supporting advanced training in close-quarters combat, marksmanship, tactical movement, and integrated maritime operations.

“The Marine Range and CQB Complex is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to Kenya’s security and regional leadership,” said Wikoff. “By investing in infrastructure and training, we are empowering Kenyan forces with the tools and skills they need to lead in securing their coastlines and maritime approaches.”

The KNAV Marine CQB Complex is a \$750,000 Section 333 Building Partnership Capacity (BPC) design-build contract managed by Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Europe, Africa, Central (EURAFCENT). This specialized facility is designed to enhance the maritime and coastal interdiction

capabilities of the newly established KNAV Marine Commandos, who are playing an increasingly prominent role in regional counterinsurgency operations along the coast and littorals. The scope includes a 100-meter small-arms range, a live-fire shoot house, and a dry-run rehearsal facility.

Wikoff's visit reaffirmed NAVAF's role as a trusted, long-term partner to Kenya amid increasing competition from external actors.

Through senior leader engagements, joint exercises, and targeted investments in training and infrastructure, the United States and Kenya are working together to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation, enhance maritime security, and promote stability across East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean.

"Our partnership with Kenya is enduring and future-focused," Wikoff said. "Together, we are building the capabilities, relationships, and trust that underpin regional security and create the conditions for lasting peace and prosperity."

For more than 80 years, NAVEUR-NAVAF has forged strategic relationships with Allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability. Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility.