

Navy Awards Marinette Marine \$30 million Contract toward Medium Landing Ships



Navy Awards Marinette Marine \$30 million Contract toward Medium Landing Ships

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded a contract to a shipbuilder for materials and engineering activities for the first four Block 1 medium landing ships (LSMs).

“Marinette Marine Corp., Marinette, Wisconsin, is awarded a \$30,000,000 not-to-exceed undefinitized contract action for advance procurement of long lead time material and associated engineering and design activities in support of four Medium Landing Ship Block 1,” the Department of War said in an April 14 contract announcement.

Marinette Marine Corp. is a unit of Fincantieri Marine Group (FMG), which also is building two Constellation-class guided-missile frigates for the U.S. Navy. The Naval Sea Systems Command obligated \$15 million of fiscal 2025 funds at the time of the contract award.

The Navy plans to procure 35 LSMs to support the Marine Corps' expeditionary advance base operations.

“Enhancing our maritime dominance depends on a modernized fleet and a strong industrial base, and today's contract helps with both – it reduces schedule risk and enables our shipbuilders to rapidly transition to ship construction,” said Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan in a post on X that also announced the contract award.

“Work will be performed in Marinette, Wisconsin (46%); De Pere, Wisconsin (39%); and Kenner, Louisiana (15%),” the Department of War's announcement said. “Work is expected to be completed by September 2027.”

In December 2025, the Navy and Marine Corps jointly announced Damen Naval's LST 100 landing ship would serve as the baseline

to field a “proven, non-developmental design – would serve as the baseline to help rapidly field LSM capability,” according to the Naval Sea Systems Command. “The LSM will fill the capability gap between smaller, short-range landing craft and the Navy’s long-duration, multi-purpose amphibious warfare ships. It is essential for the maneuver and sustainment of Marine forces, providing the critical littoral mobility required in contested environments. The program will deliver a 35-ship fleet that enhances expeditionary agility and supports the Marine Corps’ concept of distributed maneuver and logistics.”

Key points made in Fincantieri’s follow-up email announcement included the following:

- The contract supports long-lead materials procurement and early engineering and production readiness activities, enabling a potential start of construction as early as Q4 2026.

 - The LSM program is a foundational element of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps force design, with up to 35 vessels planned; FMG is designated to build at least the initial four.

 - The award builds on more than \$800 million in U.S. shipyard investments by Fincantieri over the past decade, supporting long-term naval and industrial capacity.
-

Navy Announces Commissioning Date, Location for the Future USS Cleveland



Cmdr. Bruce Hallett, commanding officer of the Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS-31) and Command Master Chief Carla Bellamy take a group photo with the Cleveland Legacy Foundation and active duty service members after revealing the ships crest with Friday, April 5, 2024.

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command, 14 April 2026

The U.S. Navy will commission the future Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS 31) on May 16, 2026, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Cmdr. Bruce Hallett, commanding officer of the Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS-31) and Command Master Chief Carla Bellamy take a group photo with the Cleveland Legacy Foundation and active-duty service members after

revealing the ship's crest with Friday, April 5, 2024.

The commissioning marks the completion of the final Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship construction phase, a sustained acquisition effort between the Navy and industry partners for two decades.

The sponsor of LCS 31 is Robyn Modly, the wife of former Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly. In keeping with Navy tradition, Modly will give the order during the ceremony to "man our ship and bring her to life!" At that moment, the commissioning pennant will be hoisted, and USS Cleveland will officially enter the fleet.

The ship's motto, "Forge a Legacy," honors Cleveland's industrial history and the strength of its citizens. The ship's crest features an anvil and a red stripe, symbolizing the city's steel manufacturing roots, and sixteen rays of sun representing USS Cleveland as the sixteenth Freedom-class ship. It is the fourth U.S. Navy ship to bear its name.

Following its commissioning, LCS 31 will be homeported at Mayport, Florida. Littoral combat ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in both near-shore and open-ocean environments, countering 21st-century coastal threats. LCS ships integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

The commissioning ceremony for the future USS Cleveland (LCS 31) will be livestreamed at <http://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/37601>. The webcast is scheduled to begin at 9:45 a.m. EST, and the ceremony begins at 10 a.m. EST on May 16.

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSF) is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control

the sea and project power ashore.

Australia, Philippine, U.S. forces conduct multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity



Sailors assigned to Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) uses the ship's 60-ton crane to lift an excavator from the Philippine Navy 3rd Naval Combat Engineer Battalion onto Ashland as part of multilateral Maritime

Cooperative Activity (MCA) with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Royal Australian Navy in Manila, Philippines, April 9, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 John B. Hetherington)
From By Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, April 12, 2026

SULU SEA – The combined forces of Australia, the Philippines and the United States conducted a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone, April 9-12, 2026. This activity demonstrated a collective commitment to strengthening regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sailors assigned to Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) uses the ship's 60-ton crane to lift an excavator from the Philippine Navy 3rd Naval Combat Engineer Battalion onto Ashland as part of multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Royal Australian Navy in Manila, Philippines, April 9, 2026. The U.S. Navy routinely operates with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and partners and allies through MCAs to continually develop, exercise and enhance multi-domain tactical interoperability to uphold peace and security in the region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John B. Hetherington)

As the fifth MCA of 2026, these regular at-sea events strengthen the interoperability of our respective military doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures. This multilateral MCA focused on critical maritime skills, including communication drills, maritime domain awareness activities and supporting equipment offload from Manila to Puerto Princesa, Philippines.

“We embrace any chance to conduct at-sea operations with our allies, Australia and the Philippines, and reinforce our commitment to security in the region,” said Cmdr. Adam

Peeples, commanding officer of U.S. Navy Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48). “These exercises provide an opportunity to strengthen our bonds, hone our skills and interoperability, and demonstrate the resilience of our crews. Our Sailors are dedicated to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific and deterring aggression.”

MCAs are conducted in a manner consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety, navigational rights, and freedoms of all nations.

Participating units included Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156) with an embarked MH-60R helicopter; Philippine Navy Rajah Sulayman-class offshore patrol vessel BRP Rajah Sulayman (PS 20) with an embarked AW109 helicopter; Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jets, A-29B Super Tucano, C-208B Grand Caravan EX aircraft, a Sokol search and rescue helicopter; Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Melchora Aquino (MRRV 9702); and U.S. Navy’s Ashland.

The U.S., along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and international airspace, as well as respect for maritime rights under international law.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. Commissioned



NORFOLK, Va.— U.S. Marine Corps retired Col. Harvey C. Barnum Jr., a Medal of Honor recipient, delivers remarks during the commissioning ceremony of Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) in Norfolk, Virginia, April 11, 2026. The U.S. Navy named the warship in Barnum's honor for his extraordinary heroism during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ellen Guo)

NORFOLK, Va. — The U.S. Navy commissioned the future USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) on April 11, 2026, in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer is the first ship to bear the name of Medal of Honor recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Col. Harvey Curtiss "Barney" Barnum Jr. The ship honors Barnum's gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life beyond the call of duty during the Vietnam War.

On Dec. 18, 1965, then-1st Lt. Barnum assumed command of his company after the commander was mortally wounded. With two armed helicopters under his control, he moved fearlessly through deadly fire to lead air attacks against the enemy's well-entrenched positions while directing one platoon in a successful counterattack on key positions. Having cleared a small area, he requested and directed the landing of two transport helicopters to evacuate the deceased and wounded. He then assisted in seizing the battalion's objective. He is among the few living namesakes to witness his ship's commissioning.

The sponsor of DDG 124 is Barnum's wife, Martha Hill. Since the ship's keel laying ceremony in 2021, Barnum and Hill have maintained a close relationship with the crew. In keeping with Navy tradition, she gave the order during the commissioning to "man our ship and bring her to life!" At that moment, the crew hoisted the commissioning pennant, and USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. became a warship and enter the fleet.

DDG 124 is homeported at Naval Station Norfolk.

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet. DDG 124 is a Flight IIA destroyer equipped with Aegis Baseline 9, which provides Integrated Air and Missile Defense capabilities, increased computing power, and radar upgrades that improve detection range and reaction time against modern air warfare and Ballistic Missile Defense threats. These highly capable, multi-mission ships provide a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface, and subsurface environments.

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.

Virginia Senators Encourage Navy to Work with Virginia's Ship Repair Industry to Balance Delayed Workloads



From the office of Senator Mark R. Warner, D-Virginia

WASHINGTON – In light of the extended deployment of Virginia-based Navy ships, including the USS *Gerald R. Ford*, U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA) sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of the Navy John Phelan encouraging him to use the appropriate tools and authorities to ensure ship repair workloads in the Commonwealth remain level, and that the Navy works with industry to prepare for upcoming maintenance demand. The *Ford's* near historic deployment, emergency repairs, and compressed maintenance cycle have disrupted the ship's scheduled servicing, which also impacts Virginia's skilled tradespeople who repair and modernize ships.

The senators began, "We write to request, in light of the Navy's surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity."

The senators encouraged the Navy to coordinate closely with industry to balance foreseeable demand and award contracts for known but stalled maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure ships get back into operations quickly.

The senators continued, "Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards

level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our Navy.”

Read the full letter [here](#) and below.

Dear Secretary Phelan,

We write to request, in light of the Navy’s surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity.

This operational tempo has had repercussions on the fleet, with the USS Gerald R. Ford now on a ten-month deployment, missing her original maintenance window and needing emergency repairs after an onboard fire. Deployments approaching historic lengths, compressed maintenance cycles, and ongoing operational demands have disrupted scheduled ship repairs in Virginia, as well as across the country. Not only do these extended deployments impact our servicemembers and their families, but we also note that these disruptions are borne by thousands of skilled tradespeople, regional economies, and the maritime industrial base across the country who repair and modernize our ships and get them ready to fight.

We encourage the Navy to be forward leaning in its strategy to manage this foreseeable demand, and work closely with industry to prepare for and balance the workload. To the greatest possible extent, the Navy should be utilizing available authorities and flexibilities to award contracts for known but

delayed maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should use this time to work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure these ships get back into operations quickly.

Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our Navy.

We urge you to continue to coordinate closely with ship repair industry leaders, and please do not hesitate to bring us into conversation to ensure the Navy and Virginia's ship repair industry has the authority, funds, and policies in place to support sustained, balanced, and coordinated ship repairs for the Navy.

HURREX 2026: U.S. Navy

Launches Major Hurricane Drill to Test Fleet and Shore Readiness



From U.S. Fleet Forces Command, April 10, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC) and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) will launch their annual hurricane preparedness and disaster response exercise, HURRICANE EXERCISE/CITADEL GALE (HURREX/CG) 2026, from April

13-24.

The two-week exercise ensures the Navy's severe weather readiness and exercises response protocols to damaging weather events along the U.S.'s Southern and Eastern coasts. It provides a focused training event for afloat and shore-based commands using simulated hurricane scenarios to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season, ensuring the fleet remains ready for global tasking and a credible deterrent.

Ensuring the resilience of our assets ashore is a critical component of national defense. HURREX/CG 2026 demonstrates the Navy's commitment to maintaining uninterrupted operational readiness, ensuring that our forces can deploy worldwide, undeterred by environmental threats. The exercise sends a clear message to any potential adversary: the U.S. Navy is resilient, protected, and always ready.

"Naval power underpins national security and economic prosperity. That strength begins at our homeports, where a warship's readiness is forged from our shore-side infrastructure and the dedicated professionals who sustain it during calm weather and heavy storms," said Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command. "HURREX/CG 26 ensures we can harden our installations to protect them and our personnel during the upcoming hurricane season, and to ensure our forces remain ready for global tasking regardless of the environment."

A new element for this year's exercise is the focus on public works scenarios designed to test the Navy's recent Shore Command and Control Realignment. This realignment places Public Works Departments directly under Installation Commanding Officers and CNIC for immediate operational response and maintenance. NAVFAC retains its role focusing on large-scale restoration, major construction, and technical

acquisition. HURREX 2026 will be the first exercise to test this new integrated command structure, with scenarios challenging CNIC-led installation teams to respond to infrastructure damage and exercise energy resilience capabilities, such as coordinating the refueling of critical generators.

“Our installations are the bedrock that enables naval power projection, and this year’s exercise places that foundation under a microscope,” said Vice Adm. Scott Gray, Commander, Navy Installations Command. “By stress-testing our new command and control structure for public works, we are validating our capacity to maintain essential services like power and water in a crisis. This proves our shore enterprise is more than just infrastructure; it is a resilient and indispensable component of the Navy’s warfighting team, enabling our Sailors and civilians to remain focused and ready.”

The exercise is structured in two distinct phases. The first week focuses on preparedness and response, simulating an approaching hurricane to drill decision-making timelines for setting Tropical Cyclone Conditions of Readiness (TCCOR), evacuating aircraft, and, if necessary, issuing sortie orders for ships to get underway.

The second week shifts to recovery operations. Following the simulated storm’s passage, commands will exercise post-storm damage assessments, mustering personnel via the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS), and restoring base operations. This phase heavily emphasizes coordination with local, state, and federal partners to ensure a unified recovery effort.

Our people are our greatest warfighting advantage, and Sailors and their families are at the center of this readiness effort. All personnel are encouraged to log into the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS) at

<https://navyfamily.navy.mil> to verify and update their contact information, which is essential for personnel accountability in a crisis.

While measures have been taken to minimize disruptions, the public may notice increased activity on and around naval installations as commands execute their response plans.

For more details on any potential local impacts, residents are encouraged to visit their respective Navy installation's website and social media channels.

Ecuador and U.S. Navies Conduct Bilateral Maritime Engagement in Pacific Ocean



Ecuadorian navy Esmeralda-class missile corvettes BAE Manabi (CM 12) and BAE Loja (CM 16) conduct formation maneuvering alongside Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101), part of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (NIMCSG), in the Pacific Ocean, April 8, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Class Gina Gallia)

From the U.S. 4th Fleet, April 9, 2026

PACIFIC OCEAN – The Ecuadorian and U.S. Navies conducted a bilateral maritime engagement as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet’s Southern Seas 2026 deployment in the Pacific Ocean, April 7-8.

The engagement, focused on increasing interoperability between the two navies, included participation by the Ecuadorian Esmeraldas-class missile corvettes BAE Manabi (CM 12) and BAE Loja (CM 16), Ecuadorian A-29 Super Tucano aircraft, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101), and F-18 Super Hornets and MH-60 Sea Hawks assigned to Carrier Air Wing

(CVW) 17.

“Engaging with partners like Ecuador ensures that when the need arises, we can work together as a proficient warfighting team, built with trust and experience,” said Rear Adm. Cassidy Norman, commander of Carrier Strike Group 11. “Training on the high seas with Ecuadoran naval forces gave us the chance to hone our critical skills while also continuing to build a relationship that is already strong and enduring.”

Training conducted included subject matter expert exchanges, simulated maritime interdiction operations scenarios, a live-fire gunnery exercise, maneuvering in formation and an air defense exercise.

Nimitz also hosted a visit of senior Ecuadorian government and military leaders including Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabriela Sommerfeld, Minister of Defense Giancarlo Loffredo, and Chief of Defense Gen. Henry Delgado. The delegation was accompanied by U.S. Charge d’Affaires a.i. in Ecuador Lawrence Petroni.

The visit was one of many planned opportunities for distinguished visitors to observe aircraft carrier operations during Southern Seas 2026.

While aboard, the Ecuadorian delegation met with Norman and Capt. Joseph Furco, commanding officer of Nimitz. The leaders discussed the Southern Seas 2026 mission and the strong security partnership between Ecuador and the U.S.

Visitors also observed flight operations and an air power demonstration from Nimitz’ flight deck.

The visit and bilateral training demonstrated the Southern Seas 2026 mission to strengthen existing regional partnerships and encourage the establishment of new relationships through the exchange of maritime mission-focused knowledge and expertise.

Southern Seas 2026 marks the 11th iteration of the exercise to the region since 2007. Like the previous deployments, Southern Seas 2026 is designed to foster goodwill, strengthen maritime partnerships to counter threats, and build the U.S. Navy's team alongside partner nation maritime services.

During the deployment, Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (NIMCSG) is scheduled to conduct passing exercises and operations at sea with partner nation maritime forces as the ships circumnavigate the continent of South America.

NIMCSG consists of Nimitz, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 9, and Gridley.

USNAVSOUTH/FOURTHFLT is the trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South America maritime forces improving regional unity and security.

Naval Postgraduate School Alumni Lead Artemis II Homebound



NPS alumnus and Artemis II mission commander retired U.S. Navy Capt. Reid Wiseman peers out the window of the Orion spacecraft just as his first lunar observation period of the day begins. Throughout the course of the sixth day of the mission, Wiseman and his crewmates took turns at the windows, capturing images and video of the Moon, along with recorded observations. (Credit NASA)

Naval Postgraduate School Alumni Lead Artemis II Homebound

April 8, 2026 | By Daniel Linehan, DoW News

Next stop – Earth.

After a historic lunar flyby at a record-setting distance, the Artemis II crew is now on its return journey, with splashdown expected April 10 in the Pacific Ocean, approximately 50-60 miles off the coast of San Diego.

Awaiting their arrival will be the amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha, positioned to recover the astronauts and capsule.

Mission commander and Naval Postgraduate School alumnus, retired Navy Capt. Reid Wiseman, now focuses on the most critical phase of the mission – bringing the crew home safely.

“We are locked in,” Wiseman said. “We are definitely excited for the second half of this mission. And we are on guard. We are the first crew to fly this vehicle. We are ready for any contingency and any scenario. We are going to stay locked in every second until we are back on that Navy ship, at home reunited with our families.”

Wiseman and spacecraft pilot, Navy Capt. Victor Glover – also an NPS alumnus – use their years of experience as Navy test pilots to guide the spacecraft, coined Integrity by the crew. Their advanced education and astronaut training will ensure a safe return to Earth.

As our blue planet grows steadily larger in the capsule’s windows, the mission’s significance is clear. Their journey around the moon has generated critical insights that will inform future Artemis missions and advance NASA’s long-term goal of human exploration beyond lunar orbit.

On the sixth day of the mission, the crew entered the moon’s sphere of influence – the point at which lunar gravity overtakes Earth’s pull – marking a key milestone in the mission. For hours, the astronauts conducted detailed observations of the moon’s near and far sides, capturing new imagery and data.

Wiseman and Glover, alongside crewmates Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen, passed within 4,070 miles of the lunar surface and experienced a 40-minute communications blackout, another defining moment of the mission.

That moment was made even more meaningful by a prerecorded message from Apollo 8 and Apollo 13 astronaut Jim Lovell, a fellow naval aviator and test pilot, who died in 2025 at 97.

“Hello Artemis II. This is Apollo astronaut Jim Lovell. Welcome to my old neighborhood,” the message read. “I’m proud to pass that torch to you as you swing around the moon and lay the groundwork for missions to Mars for the benefit of all. ... Good luck and Godspeed from all those here on the good Earth.”

The symbolism was powerful. Lovell, commander of Apollo 13, held the previous record for the farthest distance traveled from Earth at 248,655 miles. Artemis II surpassed that mark, reaching 252,760 miles, more than 4,000 miles farther than any human spaceflight before it.

During the moon flyby, the crew worked in rotating pairs for six hours, observing the lunar surface. They witnessed Earth set behind the moon, then rise again. They also saw an extremely rare view of a solar eclipse as the moon passed between the spacecraft and the sun, a first for human eyes.

While the Artemis II crew observed the moon, another spacecraft was watching them.

NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, a robotic spacecraft, captured images of the Integrity capsule as it swung around the moon. The orbiter’s mission includes mapping the moon’s surface, identifying potential resources such as water and ice and helping determine safe landing sites for future missions.

NPS faculty and students contributed to the orbiter’s fast attitude maneuvering control system, which enables the spacecraft to precisely reorient, capabilities essential for tracking and imaging.

Data from the Artemis II and imagery from the orbiter are now being processed and are anticipated by researchers at NASA and partner institutions.

This collaboration reflects a broader, enduring partnership

between NASA and NPS that advances both cutting-edge research and the education of future operational leaders and astronauts. The ability to connect real-world missions with graduate-level education remains a hallmark of the NPS experience.

Since first putting humans in space, the Navy, NPS and NASA have had an inseparable bond in space education and research; from naval aviators turned astronauts to Navy ships and sailors returning the astronauts home after splashdown; and to the scientists, engineers and leaders filling every space in-between.

With seven NPS alumni in the active NASA astronaut corps, the Navy and NPS remain vital contributors to America's future lunar missions and space exploration.

USS John P. Murtha to Support NASA's Artemis II Mission



Sailors assigned to amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26) and NASA engineers prepare to release a crew module test article from the ship's well deck, Jan. 26, 2026. John P. Murtha is underway in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations performing a just-in-time training in support of U.S. Space Command's human space flight recovery mission to retrieve NASA's Artemis II crew and spacecraft following their splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Jomark A. Almazan)

From Petty Officer 1st Class Jomark Almazan, April 6, 2026

SAN DIEGO – Amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26) is slated to serve as the recovery ship for the Orion spacecraft and its crew upon their return from the historic Artemis II mission.

The ship is named in honor of the late and long-serving Pennsylvania Congressman John P. Murtha.

“It is a fitting tribute to Congressman Murtha, who dedicated his life to serving our nation, that the ship bearing his name will be integral to this historic moment in space

exploration,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Erik Kenny, commanding officer of John P. Murtha. “He was a champion for our military and a visionary. We are honored to carry on his legacy by supporting NASA and the Artemis II mission.”

The Artemis II mission is the first crewed flight of NASA’s Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and Orion spacecraft, sending four astronauts on an approximately 10-day journey that will take them beyond the Moon. This mission will mark humanity’s first crewed voyage to the vicinity of the moon in over 50 years.

Upon completion of their mission, the Orion capsule will splash down in the Pacific Ocean, where John P. Murtha and its crew will be prepared to recover the astronauts and the spacecraft.

The U.S. Navy’s amphibious transport dock has unique advantages, including a well deck, helicopter pad, onboard medical facilities, and communication capabilities needed to support the mission. The platform gives NASA the ability to recover the Orion space capsule and collect critical data to help ensure it’s ready to recover the astronauts and capsule during future Artemis missions.

MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopters from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 23 will provide imagery support for NASA by tracking the Orion space capsule as it travels through Earth’s atmosphere. After splashdown, HSC-23 helicopters will recover the astronauts once they exit the capsule and bring them to the ship for assessment and then transport them to shore.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group (EODGRU) 1 will provide Navy divers to recover and transport the Orion space capsule from the ocean to the ship’s well deck. Navy divers are experts in mobile diving, salvage, towing, and open water, small boat operations. In addition to the Navy divers, EODGRU-1 will

support the recovery mission with a dive medical team to assess and assist the astronauts following their exit from the capsule.

Artemis II is NASA's first crewed mission in a series of missions around and to the lunar surface where crew can build and test systems needed to prepare for the challenge of future missions to Mars. The mission launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, April 1, with four astronauts onboard.