

Navy 2025 Budget Requests Only 6 Battle Force Ships



NAVAL STATION NORFOLK – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) prepares to moor pierside during the boat's homecoming at Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 15, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's fiscal 2025 budget request proposes only six battle force ships, which, combined with planned ship retirements, would reduce the size of the battle force from 296 ships to 287 ships.

The Navy's proposed \$257.6 billion budget – which officials said prioritizes readiness over procurement, would include \$32.4 billion for ship construction. Those funds would procure one Block VI Virginia-class attack submarine (SSN), two Flight

III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, one Constellation-class guided-missile frigate, one Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship (LPD), and one medium landing ship.

The proposal for only one Virginia-class SSN, rather than two, was made out of concern for the submarine industrial base, which currently is delivering only 1.3 hulls instead of the desired two SSNs per year. The gap is designed to help realign the investments in the submarine industrial base. Under the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP), the Navy expects to return to the procurement rate of two SSNs per year in fiscal 2026. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said advance procurement for the SSNs is proceeding to “set up the program for long-term success.”

The ship construction budget also includes continued incremental funding for two aircraft carriers and second Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine, the refueling and comprehensive overhaul of a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, the service-life extension of three aircushion landing craft, and the purchase of two used commercial ships for use as sealift ships.

The procurement of the San Antonio-class LPD would mark a reversal from the 2024 plan to end procurement of the class. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said the Navy is intent on growing the large- and medium amphibious warfare ship fleet to a minimum of 31 ships.

The FYDP features the procurement start in fiscal 2027 of a new class of ship, the light replenishment oiler (T-AOL).

Raven said the Navy currently has 88 ships under contract, with 66 of those under construction.

Planned ship retirements include two Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers (Shiloh and Lake Erie); two Independence-

class littoral combat ships (Jackson and Montgomery), one Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship (Germantown); one Montford Point-class expeditionary transfer dock ship (John Glenn) and the four oldest Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transports (Spearhead, Choctaw County, Millinocket, and Fall River).

Rep. Rob Wittman, R- Virginia, a member of the Seapower subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized the ship construction plan as too little.

“The president is once again proposing to shrink the Navy by reducing the Navy force structure from 296 ships in FY24 to just 287 in FY25. By only building six ships, President Biden is also threatening to devastate our naval fleet and the Hampton Roads industrial base by slowing aircraft carrier construction and failing to meet the two Virginia-class submarines per year cadence required to support the AUKUS security pact,” Wittman said in a March 11 statement.

U.S. Army Assault Helicopters Conduct Deck Landings on USNS DAHL

[By Grady T. Fontana](#)

11 March 2024

JINHAЕ, South Korea – Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (2-2 CAB) conducted deck landings with U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters on prepositioning ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312),

March 7.

Six aircraft crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB practiced single-spot deck landings onboard USNS Dahl, about five miles off the coast of Jinhae, South Korea, to certify air crew members and pilots in landing on a ship.

The DLQs were conducted through coordination between Military Sealift Command Office-Korea, USNS Dahl, and crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB to qualify or reset their crew on single-spot DLQ currency.

The training environment was also an opportunity for Army aircrews to ensure maritime air movement capability and readiness.

As a secondary training objective, MSCO-K and USNS Dahl aimed to further develop interoperability and joint relationship with 2-2 CAB during ship flight operations.

This training event for the Army also proved to be equally valuable to the crew of USNS Dahl. While mariners' conduct regular training on ship flight operations, the training environment is usually limited to classroom or computer simulations, which can sometimes not accurately reflect the challenges the crew may face at sea.

In preparation for the event, Dahl conducted a complete inventory and inspection of all flight deck equipment that included testing of all flight deck systems. In addition, Dahl conducted simulated flight deck operations, helicopter crash and fire drills in the days before the operation.

"All flight deck operations are inherently dangerous but DLQs add the wild card of potentially novice crews who are not familiar with either the vessel or ship flight operations in general," said contracted mariner Capt. Deatra Thompson,

ship's master, USNS Dahl. "Additionally, unlike many USNS vessels, Dahl does not conduct flight operations often and many of the crew, while having received training and simulated operation, some have never been involved in real-life flight operations."

To reduce danger, Dahl requested that the aircraft's crew chief depart during the train-the-trainer initial landings to provide hands-on instruction to the Dahl Chock and Chain teams to ensure they were familiar with the methods and placement of the fastening equipment.

The event was executed safely and without incident and resulted in six single-spot deck-landing qualified crews across 2-2 CAB.

"This event demonstrated effective joint coordination and was a great chance for MSC0-K and USNS Dahl to support a valuable training opportunity for our U.S. Army partners stationed here in Korea," said Cmdr. Patrick J. Moore, commanding officer, MSC0-K. "Overall, there was great collaboration between MSC0-K, USNS Dahl, and the soldiers of 2-2 CAB."

Maritime prepositioning ship USNS Dahl is a Watson-class large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship and is part of Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3.

Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3 supports warfighters from all the U.S. Armed Forces by prepositioning Military Sealift Command ships throughout the Indo-Pacific Region, ensuring Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps vehicles, heavy equipment, personnel and supplies are strategically positioned to support the full range of military operations.

Commander, Military Sealift Command Far East ensures approximately 50 ships in the Indo-Pacific Region, are manned,

trained and equipped to deliver essential supplies, fuel, cargo, and equipment to warfighters, both at sea and on shore.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and Reserve military personnel.

March 11 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 11, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 8:50 a.m. and 12:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 11, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of into the Red Sea toward merchant vessel Pinocchio, a Singaporean-owned, Liberian-flagged ship. The missiles did not impact the vessel and there were no injuries or damage reported.

Between 2:50-11:30 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 11, United States Central Command conducted six self-defense strikes destroying an unmanned underwater vessel and 18 anti-ship missiles in Houthi controlled areas of Yemen. It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

USS Annapolis Visits Perth, Australia, in AUKUS Event



ROCKINGHAM, Australia (March 10, 2024) The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Annapolis (SSN 760) pulls alongside Diamantina Pier at Fleet Base West in Rockingham, Western Australia, March 10, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaitlyn E. Eads) March 10, 2024

USS Annapolis (SSN 760) arrived in HMAS Stirling in Perth, Western Australia Sunday.

This marks the second visit by a U.S. fast-attack submarine to HMAS Stirling since the announcement of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway in March 2023. The Optimal Pathway is designed to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack

submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

“Historically, we’ve had allied SSNs visit Australian ports for many decades totaling more than 1,800 days,” said Rear Adm. Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability at the Australian Submarine Agency. “Starting with USS North Carolina (SSN 777) last August, these visits are taking on a more important meaning for the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Submarine Agency as we build the infrastructure, knowledge, and stewardship needed to establish SRF-West in 2027.”

Increasing the number of SSN visits to Australia and the establishment of SRF-W comprise the first of three Optimal Pathway phases. As early as 2027, the United States will begin rotational presence in the Western Australia facility as a way to grow the RAN’s ability to operate and maintain a fleet of SSNs. Ultimately, there will be up to four U.S. Virginia-class submarines and one United Kingdom Astute-class submarine at HMAS Stirling.

The second phase of the Optimal Pathway begins in the early 2030s, with the United States selling Australia three Virginia-class submarines, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed. Phase Three sees the combination of a base British submarine design and advanced United States technology to deliver SSN-AUKUS, the future attack submarine for both Australia and the United Kingdom. Australia plans to deliver the first Australian-built SSN-AUKUS in the early 2040s.

“Having our submarines rotating through HMAS Stirling is critical to building Australia’s sovereign capability to safely and competently operate SSNs,” shared Rear Adm. Lincoln Reifsteck, the U.S. AUKUS Pillar One Program Manager. “Each visit will build upon the previous one and allow the RAN team to grow its capabilities. This visit will see Australians take a more active role in the execution of a voyage repair period.”

“For decades, the U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Navy have trained and operated together,” said Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, Commander, Submarine Group (CSG) 7. “AUKUS is a natural extension of our already close relationship, building unprecedented capability and interoperability that will pay dividends for generations.”

“It’s an honor to be here and the team looks forward to working with the Australians and furthering our relationship,” said Cmdr. James Tuthill, Commanding Officer, USS Annapolis. “The enthusiasm and professionalism of the HMAS Stirling team is apparent, and we look forward to making this visit as productive as possible.”

Initially announced in September 2021, the AUKUS trilateral agreement is a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of the three nations that also promotes stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under Pillar I of AUKUS via the Optimal Pathway announced by the heads of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023.

**UPDATE: US and Coalition
Defeat Houthi Attack in Red
Sea Area**



USCENTCOM, March 9, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Following further engagements through the morning, U.S. and Coalition forces downed a total of at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles between 4:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 9.

No U.S. or Coalition Navy vessels were damaged in the attack and there were also no reports by commercial ships of damage.

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area

March 9, 2024

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area Between 4 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists conducted a large-scale uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) attack into the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. CENTCOM and coalition forces identified the one-way attack (OWA) UAVs and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels, U.S. Navy, and coalition ships in the region. U.S. Navy vessels and aircraft along with multiple coalition navy ships and aircraft shot down 15 OWA UAVs. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure.

March 8 Red Sea Update

TAMPA, Fla. - At approximately 9:50 a.m. (Sanaa time), United States Central Command conducted a self-defense strike against two Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists' truck-mounted anti-ship missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. At approximately 3:55 p.m. (Sanaa time), Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen into the Gulf of Aden at M/V Propel Fortune, a Singapore-flagged, owned, and operated vessel. The missiles did not impact the vessel. There were no injuries or damages reported. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

Navy Reserve Receives Its First P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft



TUKWILA, Wash. (March 6, 2024) Cmdr. James Tilden (fifth from left), executive officer of Patrol Squadron 62, presents a dedication plaque to Vice Adm. John B. Mustin (sixth from left), chief of Navy Reserve and commander of Navy Reserve Force, after taking delivery of the first new P-8A Poseidon for the Naval Air Force Reserve during a ceremony at Boeing Military Delivery Facility in Tukwila, Washington, March 6, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Harry Andrew D. Gordon)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The first Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft for the Navy Reserve has been delivered to Patrol Squadron 62 (VP-62).

In March 6 ceremonies at the Boeing Military Delivery Facility in Tukwila, Washington, Vice Adm. John B. Mustin, chief of Navy Reserve and commander of Navy Reserve Force, was on hand for the delivery, where a dedication was presented to him by Cmdr. James Tilden, executive officer of VP-62.

VP-62, based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, is one of two Navy Air Reserve patrol squadrons. It formerly operated the P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft. The transition brings the Navy closer to full operational capability with the P-8A. The other reserve VP squadron, VP-69 at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, also will be equipped with the P-8A.

Coast Guard offloads \$4.5 million in seized cocaine, transfers custody of 2 smugglers to federal law enforcement in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico



March 8, 2024

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier offloaded 182 kilograms of cocaine and transferred custody of two male smugglers to federal law enforcement authorities in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Friday.

The British Royal Navy HMS Trent (P224), operating with a Coast Guard LEDET onboard, seized the contraband and apprehended two smugglers, Dominican Republic nationals, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel in Caribbean Sea waters southwest coast of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, March 3, 2024.

The interdiction is a result of interagency efforts in support of the Coast Guard's Western Hemisphere Strategy and Operation Unified Resolve. The Drug Enforcement Administration is leading the investigation in this case.

"We appreciate the work and collaboration of our British Royal Navy partners in stopping drug smuggling vessels in the high seas," said Cmdr. Gerard Wenk, Coast Guard Sector San Juan chief of response. "The work we do together daily with our federal and local and regional partners helps protect and bring stability to the Caribbean region from this threat."

"Drug smuggling organizations pose the greatest threat to the safety and health of our citizens," said DEA's Caribbean Division Special Agent in Charge Denise Foster. "The dedication of all maritime surveillance assets is crucial to the success of the mission at hand, we will continue to work with our counterparts and allocate all our law enforcement resources to make a greater impact in vulnerable areas where criminal organizations dedicated to drug trafficking are causing greater damage."

The Coast Guard's efforts under Operation Unified Resolve contribute to the interagency results being achieved daily under Operation Caribbean Guard, which coordinates efforts between the Coast Guard, DHS, and Commonwealth and Territorial law enforcement partners, who are working diligently to deter, detect and disrupt illicit maritime trafficking to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Detecting and interdicting illegal drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. The Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

Under Secretary Raven Visits United Kingdom and Norway to Discuss Regional Security, Highlights Importance of Interoperability



March 8, 2024

From Under Secretary of the Navy Public Affairs

OSLO, Norway – The Under Secretary of the Navy Erik

Raven visited the United Kingdom and Norway, March 3-8, to meet with partner navies, government and military leaders, Sailors and Marines, and to observe a NATO arctic exercise.

The international trip began in London, and was followed by visits to Oslo, Trondheim, Evenes, and Alta in Norway.

In London, Raven met with First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff of the United Kingdom Adm. Sir Ben Key, Minister of the Armed Forces James Heappey, and Chief Defence Nuclear Maddie McTernan where they discussed Ukraine, U.S.-UK Carrier Cooperation, and AUKUS progress.

The Under Secretary visited Barrow-In-Furness to speak with Royal Navy leaders, Sailors, and industry partners about undersea warfare, to include progress made on implementing AUKUS Pillar I. He toured shipyard facilities, a dry-dock, and the Submarines Academy for Skills and Knowledge.

"I want to thank Admiral Key and the Royal Navy for their global contributions to maritime security and stability," said Raven. "We fly, sail, and operate on a daily basis with the United Kingdom, and together our strong partnership helps us to ensure security, stability, and prosperity."

In Norway, Raven met with Norwegian Minister of Defense State Secretary Anne-Marie Aanerud, Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen. Ingrid Gjerde, Chief of Staff, Chief of Defense General Erik Kristofferson, and Norwegian Intelligence Service Vice Adm. Andreas Stensønes.

Discussions focused on military capabilities, maritime surveillance, security challenges in the Nordic region, and ways to further increase cooperation and interoperability.

"The Arctic is a region of strategic importance," said the Under Secretary. "Working together, the Navy and Marine Corps are supporting maritime statecraft while maintaining freedom of navigation and adhering to the rules-based

international order.”

“Working with our Allies and partners, we will preserve the Arctic as a space free of conflict, where nations act responsibly, and where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable, transparent manner.”

Raven toured the Marine Corp Prepositioning Program-Norway in the Frigaard Cave in Trondheim, Norway. At Evenes, he observed a combat craft demonstration in the Norwegian fjords and met with U.S. Navy Seabees providing maritime support.

The trip concluded with the observation of the NATO-led arctic exercise Northern Response 24, in Alta. Nordic Response 24 is hosted by Norway and supported by Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe, along with contributions from all U.S. military services. This is one of a long list of impactful engagements underscoring the longstanding alliance between Norway and the United States. With diplomatic relations forged nearly 120 years ago in 1905, the two nations and their militaries remain strategically and operationally synchronized.

“The rules-based international order depends on free and open oceans, and the militaries and service members of the European nations participating in this exercise have an instrumental role in upholding that standard,” said Raven. “Realistic exercises like Northern Response 24 allow us to work with like-minded nations to strengthen our partnerships and ensure we are trained, ready, and interoperable for crises or conflict.”

More than 20,000 service members from 14 nations are participating in Nordic Response 24. Participating nations include: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The trip marked Raven’s second to the United Kingdom and his

first to Norway.

NAVAIR returns V-22 Osprey to flight status



Mar 8, 2024

Naval Air System, PAX River – Effective March 8, 2024 at 7 a.m. EST, Naval Air Systems Command is issuing a flight clearance for the V-22 Osprey thereby lifting the grounding. This decision follows a meticulous and data-driven approach prioritizing the safety of our aircrews.

A U.S. Air Force investigation began following the tragic loss of eight Airmen during the November 29, 2023, mishap off Yakushima, Japan. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen.

In response to the preliminary investigation indicating a materiel failure of a V-22 component, the V-22 grounding was initiated on December 6, 2023. The grounding provided time for a thorough review of the mishap and formulation of risk mitigation controls to assist with safely returning the V-22 to flight operations.

In concert with the ongoing investigation, NAVAIR has diligently worked with the USAF-led investigation to identify the materiel failure that led to the mishap. Close coordination among key senior leaders across the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force has been paramount in formulating the comprehensive review and return to flight plan, and this collaboration will continue.

Maintenance and procedural changes have been implemented to address the materiel failure that allow for a safe return to flight. The U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force will each execute their return to flight plans according to service specific guidelines.

NAVAIR remains committed to transparency and safety regarding all V-22 operations. The V-22 plays an integral role in supporting our Nation's defense and returning these vital assets to flight is critical to supporting our nation's interests. NAVAIR continuously monitors data and trends from all aircraft platforms, so service members are provided the safest, most reliable aircraft possible.

The safety of our pilots, aircrew and surrounding communities remains of paramount importance.

Amphib Warship Part Suppliers Press Congress for Stability in Shipbuilding



The future USS *Richard M. McCool Jr.* (LPD 29), the Navy's next Flight I San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship, seen on sea trials. (HII)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. companies that supply components and parts for the U.S. Navy's amphibious warfare fleet expressed support for the Marine Corps baseline requirement of 31 large and medium amphibious warfare ships in the U.S. fleet and the industry's need for stability and predictability in schedules.

Retired Coast Guard Capt. Paul J. Roden, chairman of the board of the Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition (AWIBC), which represents approximately 650 companies throughout the United States, told Seapower that the Marine Corps has stressed that "ready and available" 31-ship requirement is

“not a ceiling, it’s the floor.”

Roden stressed the point that it is difficult for suppliers to produce efficiently when production schedules are unpredictable. He said that the stability needed is best achieved when the large-deck amphibious assault ships (LHAs) are built with construction intervals of four-year centers and the amphibious platform dock ships (LPDs) are built with intervals of two-year centers.

Full funding by Congress for LPD 33 in the fiscal 2025 defense budget is a priority for the AWIBC, he said.

AWIBC recently conducted a survey of its member companies.

Regarding the shipbuilding intervals, “50% of the survey respondents replied that extending those would result in an increase in cost of their products and services. When you are throwing uncertainty to any procurement, then there is risk, and risk is addressed by cost, so it is really in the Navy’s best interest to maintain those centers.”

Roden said that if an LHA or LPD were delayed by a year or more, “40% of all of our members [companies] would anticipate needing to lay off workers due to uncertainty and not having full capacity in plants of the AWIBC suppliers. About a third said they would have to explore commercial contracts as well as de-prioritize shipbuilding, but in many cases, there is just not a commercial market.”

He said that “about 70% of our respondents said that the most helpful thing that the government could do is provide predictability and stability.

“One way of going about that – that has been proven successful in other programs—is through multi-ship and multi-year procurement strategies,” he said.

Roden also said that “just over 50% of the suppliers that

contribute to both amphibious warship and submarine programs ... said that steady amphib contracts benefit their company's capacity and capability to deliver on submarine programs. Having predictability and stability in shipbuilding programs allows suppliers to make investments. If they know the business is coming, they can make investments in work force training, enhancing work force, investing in equipment, investing in other infrastructure that would improve the quality and on-time delivery of products."