

U.S. Navy Releases Command Investigation into USS Connecticut Grounding



The Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) departs Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton for deployment, May 27, 2021. Its underwater collision happened a few months later. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Mack Jamieson*

PEARL HARBOR – The U.S. Navy has released [the command investigation](#) into the USS Connecticut (SSN 22) grounding that occurred Oct. 2, 2021, the U.S. Pacific Fleet said May 23.

USS Connecticut grounded on an uncharted seamount while operating submerged in a poorly surveyed area in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region. The investigation determined the grounding was preventable. Specifically, the grounding resulted from an accumulation of unit-level errors and omissions in navigation planning, watch team execution and

risk management, all of which were deemed to fall far below U.S. Navy standards.

The investigation and endorsements describe what happened, promulgate lessons learned, memorialize completed corrective actions, document accountability actions and delineate pending actions that must be finalized with a sense of urgency.

In addition to addressing the unit-level errors that caused the grounding, the investigation highlighted specific areas for improvement in the deployment training and certification process, and the Navy is urgently implementing these improvements across the Submarine Force. This investigation delineates 28 corrective actions, of which 14 actions are complete, 13 actions are in progress, and one is enduring.

In implementing these significant improvements, the Navy said it will become a more effective fighting force.

Raytheon awarded \$423 Million Navy Contract for SPY-6 Family of Radars



Raytheon's SPY-6 radar. *RAYTHEON MISSILES & DEFENSE*

TUCSON, Ariz. – Raytheon Missiles & Defense has been awarded a \$423 million contract to continue to produce SPY-6 radars for the U.S. Navy, the company said May 23. This is the first option exercised from the March 2022 hardware, production and sustainment contract that is valued up to \$3.16 billion over five years.

“SPY-6 is the premiere surface naval radar in the world, and contracts like this ensure Sailors across the fleet will be equipped with the information, tracking and detection it provides,” said Kim Ernzen, president of Naval Power at Raytheon Missiles & Defense. “SPY-6 radar arrays have already been delivered to multiple ships with installation ongoing.”

The SPY-6 family of radars can defend against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, hostile aircraft and surface ships simultaneously. They provide several advantages over legacy radars, including significantly greater detection range, increased sensitivity and more accurate discrimination. Their scalable and modular radar arrays reduce cost and sustainment needs, while meeting the mission requirements of seven classes of ships.

Airbus Wins Contract for Continuing Lakota Helicopter Fleet Support



A UH-72A Lakota helicopter attached to the U.S. Army 112th Aviation Regiment takes off from Naval Air Station Key West's Boca Chica Field in Key West, Florida, on March 3. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Nicholas V. Huynh*

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas – Airbus has signed a follow-on contractor logistics support contract with the U.S. Army to provide spare parts, material, and engineering support for the Army's entire UH-72A and UH-72B Lakota fleet of 482 utility and training helicopters. The fleet includes several UH-72As on loan to the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School.

The contract includes a six-month base and 4.5 option years,

with a potential total value of more than \$1.5 Billion. Airbus will provide support across 67 Lakota sites in the U.S. and overseas. This includes National Guard bases in 43 states, and Fort Rucker in Alabama, where the UH-72A performs the Army's Initial Entry Rotary Wing mission.

The CLS contract with the U.S. Army is the largest helicopter performance-based support contract managed by Airbus worldwide.

"Airbus has provided exceptional product and support services in the UH-72A for nearly two decades," said Col. Calvin Lane, U.S. Army Utility project manager. "This contract underscores the Army's trust in the aircraft's capabilities, and we look forward to the continued support this contract provides to the UH-72 fleet."

The contract will be managed by Airbus U.S. Space & Defense. Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia.

Navy's MQ-8C Fire Scout Operating in Westpac; MQ-8Bs to Be Retired



Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class Corie Wooldridge, from San Marcos, California, performs ground turns on an MQ-8C Fire Scout, attached to the “Wildcards” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23, assigned to the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6). *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Charles DeParlier*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy’s MQ-8C version of its Fire Scout unmanned helicopter is now operating on its first deployment to the Western Pacific, the second deployment of the type so far. Meanwhile, the Navy is proceeding with plans to accelerate retirement of the fleet of older MQ-8B versions in fiscal 2023.

The Independence-class littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6) is operating with a detachment from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23, which includes an MQ-8C. The Jackson is the first LCS deployed to the Western Pacific since the summer of 2020 and began operations with the MQ-8C on April 20. Two other LCSs are deployed in the Indo-Pacific region with the older MQ-8B version

The Northrop Grumman MQ-8C, based on the Bell 407 airframe, can carry the Leonardo ZPY-8 Osprey radar, the Teledyne FLIR Brite Star II electro-optical/infrared sensor and the Automatic Information System for surface search and tracking,

said Scott Weinpel, Northrop Grumman's business development director for Fire Scout, in a May 23 interview with *Seapower*. It can augment the MH-60S Seahawk manned helicopter also deployed with the helicopter squadron detachment.

Weinpel said the COBRA II (Coastal Battlefield Reconnaissance and Analysis II) sensor is being developed to give the MQ-8C a day/night mine-hunting capability over a larger area and in a deeper water column than the COBRA I deployed on the MQ-8B.

The MQ-8C first deployed in December 2021 on the Freedom-class LCS USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) in the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

The Navy has 36 MQ-8Cs on strength. In the Navy's fiscal 2023 budget request, the service plans to place about half of the MQ-8Cs in long-term preservation, Weinpel said, attributing the decision to the Navy's budget priorities.

"We really are hoping that, with our mission extension efforts and the capabilities and enhancements that we want to incorporate with Fire Scout, that the future looks bright, especially as we look towards the future [Constellation-class] frigate, where Fire Scout is incorporated into [the Navy's] Capabilities Development Documents for FFG 62," he said. "We fully expect that we will be a part of that requirement."

"It would be an appropriate time to pull those [MQ-8Cs] out of preservation and incorporate them with that [frigate] fleet," he said, noting that the MQ-8C could easily pivot to the antisubmarine warfare mission set, deploying sonobuoys and relaying the acoustic data that they would collect to the mother ship or another ASW platform.

Weinpel also said Northrop Grumman could relatively easily restart production of the MQ-8C if required.

He also confirmed the Navy's decision to accelerate retirement of its fleet of MQ-8Bs to fiscal 2023 from 2024, also a result

of budget pressure. He said the retired MQ-8Bs could be adapted to homeland security roles, including service with Customs and Border Protection.

Weinpel said the MQ-8C performed well on its first deployment.

“We had great feedback from the operators of the HSC-22 detachment,” he said. “They were able to use the radar and EO/IR, [and] had great TCDL [Tactical Common Data Link] operational use, so they were able to fly out to the maximum range of the Fire Scout and then they were also distribute some of the information that was getting down to the Fire Scout control station to other areas of the ship where it became relevant as they were able to conduct some counter-narcotics missions.”

Earlier this month, an MQ-8C provided bomb hit analysis for a Hellfire Longbow missile shoot from the Independence-class LCS USS Montgomery (LCS 8).

**Littoral Combat Ship USS
Minneapolis-Saint Paul
Commissioned**



Sailors salute the audience during the commissioning ceremony of the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) in Duluth, Minnesota. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sonja Wickard*

DULUTH, Minn. – The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest littoral combat ship, USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), in Duluth, Minnesota, May 21, 2022, said Commander, Naval Surface Force, US Pacific Fleet, in a release.

Rep. Betty McCollum, of Minnesota's 4th District, was the principal speaker for the commissioning ceremony.

"The strength of America's national security, and the democratic values we hold dear, are being tested today like they have not been in decades," said McCollum. "I can think of no two names that represent that strength more than Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Together we are one team – those who built this fine ship, and those who will serve on her. It is the strength and determination of the American people that

is the backbone of our national security.”

Erik Raven, undersecretary of the Navy, reflected on attending his first commissioning ceremony. “The Twin Cities represent the Great State of Minnesota’s economic, cultural, and political center. The Twin Cities play a significant role in our nation’s economic network,” said Raven. “Now, more than ever, it is fitting that a littoral combat ship is named Minneapolis-Saint Paul – honoring the legacy of work and contribution of the people whose work ultimately impacts our daily lives nationwide and globally.”

Vice Admiral Scott Conn, deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Requirements and Capabilities also attended. “Thank you all for preparing LCS 21 for this day,” said Conn. “I recognize how special it is to be together for this milestone, and to spend this day bringing the newest ship in our fleet to life in this way. And more so, to do it in the State of her namesake cities is unique and special.”

The governor of Minnesota, Tim Walz, also attended the ceremony. “This is a unique opportunity to gather ourselves as Minnesotans, and Americans,” said Walz. “We’re not just a country; we’re an ideal.”

Guest speakers for the event were Jon Rambeau, vice president and general manager of Lockheed Martin Integrated Warfare Systems and Sensors and Sen. Amy Klobuchar.

Rep. Pete Stauber, of Minnesota’s 8th District, assisted in placing the ship into commission. The ship’s sponsor Jodi Greene, former deputy undersecretary of the Navy, gave the first order to “man our ship and bring her to life.”

Built by the Lockheed Martin and Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, Wisconsin. Minneapolis-Saint Paul was launched and christened in on June 15, 2019. The ship completed

acceptance trials, Aug. 21, 2020, and was delivered to U.S. Navy on Nov. 18, 2021.

Minneapolis-Saint Paul will be homeported at Naval Station Mayport, Florida.

Ishee Nominated for Vice Admiral and Command of U.S. 6th Fleet



Rear Adm. Thomas E. Ishee. *U.S NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III announced May 20 that the president has made the following nomination:

Navy Rear Adm. Thomas E. Ishee for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as commander, 6th Fleet; commander, Task Force Six; commander, Striking and Support Forces NATO; deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe; deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Africa; and Joint Force Maritime Component Commander Europe, Naples, Italy. Ishee is currently serving as director, Global Operations, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

Ishee is a native of Danielsville, Georgia, and a 1987 graduate of the University of Georgia, where he majored in mathematics and computer science. He was commissioned in 1988 after attending Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island and earned a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Arts in Security Studies from the Air War College.

His sea tours included assignments onboard submarines USS Narwhal (SSN 671), USS Sea Devil (SSN 664), engineer officer onboard USS Tunny (SSN 682) and executive officer onboard USS La Jolla (SSN 701).

He commanded USS Key West (SSN 722). While in command, the crew was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation, the U.S. Pacific Fleet Arleigh Burke Trophy and Battle Efficiency Award. He also commanded Submarine Squadron 11, where he ensured the readiness of six fast attack submarines and oversaw the operations of three torpedo retrievers, a floating drydock and the Navy's submarine rescue systems.

His tours ashore included assistant professor of Naval Science at the University of Texas at Austin; engineer and executive officer of Moored Training Ship MTS 626; executive assistant to the deputy commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet; director of intelligence and special operations for Commander, Submarine Force U.S. Pacific Fleet; director of operations for Commander, Submarine Group 7 and Task Force 54/74; senior

advisor to the Secretary of Defense for U.S. Pacific Command Plans; executive assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations; deputy commander, Joint Functional Component Command-Global Strike; director of operations, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa; deputy commander, U.S. 6th Fleet, and commander, Submarine Group 8.

USS Ronald Reagan CSG Departs Yokosuka for 2022 Deployment



YOKOSUKA, Japan – The U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), and its strike group departed Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka on May 20 to support security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, said Lt. Cmdr. Joe Keiley, Commander, Task Force 71 Public

Affairs, in a release.

During this routine at-sea period, Ronald Reagan, its strike group ships, the embarked Carrier Air Wing 5, Carrier Strike Group 5 and Destroyer Squadron 15 staffs are expected to work with allies and partners, promote adherence to a rules-based international order, as well as maintain presence and flexibility to meet the needs of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Ronald Reagan successfully completed sea trials in preparation for deployment on May 17.

“Ronald Reagan’s forward deployed presence underscores our nation’s commitment to our allies and partners,” said Capt. Fred Goldhammer, Ronald Reagan’s commanding officer. “Our crew has worked very hard to make the ship ready to face any future challenge, and I am tremendously proud of their efforts. The Sailors onboard Ronald Reagan are incredibly talented and resilient, and their unwavering commitment to our mission helps ensure that our nation’s maritime presence remains strong.”

Sailors manned the rails in summer white uniforms as the ship pulled away from the pier.

“The Ronald Reagan strike group and its team of professional Sailors across its commands, are ready to respond throughout the region in service of our maritime interests,” said Rear Adm. Michael Donnelly, commander, Task Force 70, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 5. “The support of our families makes what we do at sea possible. In the days ahead we will strengthen our relationships with like-minded allies and partners, and deter anyone who would seek to disrupt international norms.”

The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group will include the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers USS Antietam (CG 54)

and USS Chancellorsville (CG 62), as well as Arleigh Burke-class destroyers from DESRON 15.

Navy Awards General Dynamics Electric Boat \$313.9 Million for Columbia-Class Submarine Work



An artist's rendering of the future Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines. *U.S. NAVY*

GROTON, Conn. – General Dynamics Electric Boat, a business unit of General Dynamics, has been awarded a modification to

the previously awarded Columbia Integrated Product and Process Contract by the Naval Sea Systems Command, the company said May 19. The modification has a total value of \$313.9 million.

The contract modification will support submarine industrial base development and expansion for the construction of the Columbia-class fleet ballistic missile submarines as well as additional support for the manufacturing, procurement and delivery efforts for United Kingdom Strategic Weapon Support System kits.

“Ballistic-missile submarines are the critical, survivable leg of our nation’s nuclear arsenal and Columbia is the Navy’s top acquisition priority,” said Kevin Graney, president of General Dynamics Electric Boat. “We are grateful for the steadfast trust and support the Navy and Congress have in Electric Boat as we continue the work we began 15 years ago to deliver Columbia and the next 60 years of deterrence for our nation.”

Electric Boat will continue to work with its vendors and subcontractors to optimize efforts to ramp up production capability and support the increased demand associated with the Columbia program.

At 560 feet long with a displacement of nearly 21,000 tons, the submarines of the Columbia class will be the largest ever built by the United States. The Columbia will have a fuel core that will power the submarine for its entire service life, eliminating the need for a mid-service refueling and increasing the time the ship can spend on deployment. Electric Boat will deliver the lead ship to the Navy in 2027.

Navy to Commission Future Littoral Combat Ship Minneapolis-Saint Paul



The future USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (PCU LCS-21) arrives in Duluth, Minnesota on May 16. PCU LCS-21 is a United States Navy Freedom-class littoral combat ship that will be commissioned in the Port of Duluth on Saturday, May 21. *U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD / 1st Lt. Crystal Kirchner*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy will commission the future USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) as the newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship during a 10 a.m. CDT ceremony Saturday, May 21, in Duluth, Minnesota, the Defense Department said May 20.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul is the second naval ship to honor Minnesota's Twin Cities, although each city has been honored twice before.

The principal speaker is U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum. Additional speakers include Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz; U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar; U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber; Undersecretary of the Navy Erik Raven; Vice Adm. Scott Conn, deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities; and Jon Rambeau, vice president and general manager of Lockheed Martin Integrated Warfare Systems and Sensors. The ship's sponsor is Jodi Greene, principle at the Mabus Group and former deputy undersecretary of the Navy for policy. She will give the first order to "man our ship and bring her to life."

"It is fitting that a littoral combat ship is named for Minneapolis-Saint Paul, honoring the rich history, hard work, and contributions of the people there," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. "I am certain the crew who will man this ship will carry on the legacy of the Twin Cities and will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom."

The first U.S. Navy warship named Minneapolis-Saint Paul was a Los Angeles-class submarine launched in 1983 that participated in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (SSN 708) was the first submarine to carry Tomahawk missiles specifically designed for use in strikes against Iraq during the Gulf War. Having served for over two decades with distinction, the Navy decommissioned the submarine in 2007.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul will homeport at Naval Station Mayport, Florida.

The ceremony will be live-streamed at [USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Commissioning](#). The link becomes active approximately 10 minutes before the event (9:50 a.m. CST).

MQ-25 Team Preps for first Air Vehicle, Control Station Integration Test Event



Rear Adm. Brian Corey, who oversees the Program Executive Office for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons, observes an MQ-25 engineer demonstrate the functionality of the unmanned system's MD-5 ground control station May 17 at the System Test and Integration Lab in Patuxent River, Maryland. *U.S. NAVY* PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy's Unmanned Carrier Aviation program office (PMA-268) is moving forward with integrating its two key elements – the MQ-25 air vehicle and the MD-5 ground control station – at the program's System Test and Integration Lab at Patuxent River, Maryland, the Program Executive Office for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons said May 18.

PMA-268 is the lead systems integrator, working closely with its two prime industry partners, Boeing and Lockheed Martin Skunk Works, to ensure the expeditious integration of the MQ-25 Stingray air vehicle, the MD-5 GCS and aircraft carrier

modifications required to support MQ-25 operations.

The MD-5 GCS is part of the Unmanned Carrier Aviation Mission Control System, the system-of-systems required for MQ-25A command and control. UMCS also includes aircraft carrier and shore site infrastructure modifications, Navy produced ancillary equipment and integration with command, control, communications, computers and intelligence systems.

Rear Adm. Brian Corey, who oversees the Program Executive Office for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons, visited the lab May 17 for a firsthand look at the equipment required to operate MQ-25.

"It is great to see momentum with GCS following the successful MQ-25 flight demonstrations last year," he said to the government/industry team. "The air vehicle and GCS are equally important to this program and this is the team that is going to stitch it together."

Just recently, Lockheed Martin delivered the latest system developmental release to the Navy and plans to help integrate the MD-5 system with the air vehicle next month.

"This will be the first time we are integrating an air vehicle and GCS from two different prime contractors," said T.J. Maday, MQ-25 labs and integration manager. "And this is all being done with the government as the lead system integrator within the government lab."

Early integration allows for risk reduction and integration testing between the air vehicle and ground control station and provides the opportunity to ensure network connectivity between development environments are functional.

Lockheed Martin also recently delivered two MD-5 ground control stations to Webster Outlying Field in Saint Inigoes, Maryland, to support MQ-25's test transportable control stations. These will be the first assets to control the

MQ-25's initial Unmanned Carrier Aviation Mission Control System flight in 2023.

The MQ-25 will be the world's first operational, carrier-based unmanned aircraft. It will provide an aerial refueling capability that extends the range, operational capability and lethality of the carrier air wing.