

NAVIFOR Showcases Information Warfare Dominance at WEST 2026



Vice Adm. Mike Vernazza, Commander, Naval Information Forces, addresses a crowd industry leaders, service members and media personnel during the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association International. The premier naval conference and exposition on the West coast, West is now in its 36th year of bringing military and industry leaders together. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ray McCann)
[by Joshua Rodriguez, NAVIFOR Public Affairs Office](#)

11 February 2026

San Diego – SAN DIEGO – Naval Information Forces (NAVIFOR) had a significant presence at the West 2026 conference this week at the San Diego Convention Center. As a leader in the Information Warfare (IW) community, NAVIFOR highlighted its

latest advancements and strategic initiatives aimed at ensuring the Navy's competitive edge in sustaining maritime dominance.

This year marked the 11th year for the Navy Information Warfare Pavilion, which featured displays, technology demonstrations, and direct engagement with IW subject matter experts and Sailors. The pavilion served as a central hub for collaboration between the military, industry, and academia.

Further showcasing NAVIFOR's leadership, Vice Adm. Mike Vernazza, commander of Naval Information Forces, the Navy's "IBoss" participated in two key panel discussions: "What is Required to Achieve 80 percent Surge Readiness?" and "From Learning to Lethality: Accelerating Technological Leadership Through Warfighter Education."

"Our participation in these panels was a tremendous opportunity to underscore a fundamental truth: readiness and lethality are forged by our Information Warfare Sailors," said Vernazza.

"Ultimately, our goal is to provide a worldclass professional IW force, trained, equipped and certified to conduct what our Nation may ask, manned with confident, resilient Sailors who are masters of their craft."

Vernazza, also spoke at the Navy's IW pavilion, and his remarks emphasized the critical evolution of information warfare. "IW is no longer just a supporting element; we are a primary warfighting function delivering decision advantage and lethality to the fleet, from seabed to space," stated the IBoss.

His addresses underscored the command's focus on its people, readiness, and the operationalization of IW. "It cannot

be understated that our people have always been and remain our greatest advantage,” Vernazza emphasized. He highlighted several key initiatives driving the community forward, including:

Initiated the stand-up of Information Warfare Squadrons (IWRONs) to place IW Commanders in command earlier, modeling the structure after Air Wings and Destroyer Squadrons. This includes the ongoing 48-month pilot program for IWRON Two on the East Coast and the upcoming IWRON on the West Coast.

Graduated the first Navy officers from the Space Force Weapons Instructor Course, integrating space knowledge directly into the Fleet and partnering with the Space Force.

Collaborated on an AI Master’s Degree program with the Naval Post Graduate School, with NAVIFOR sponsoring the first cohort.

Supported the United Kingdom’s 2025 deployment of the Prince of Wales with an embedded IW officer, enhancing combined capabilities.

Partnered with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) to launch a practical, applied AI Master’s Degree program for both IW and URL officers. Also, invested IW talent in the NPS AI Task Force.

Instituted “Tech Times” for IW rates around the world to provide dedicated time for Sailors to deepen their technical expertise with senior mentorship.

Launched the second round of the “Big Ideas Challenge” to crowd-source innovation from Sailors.

Shifted IW’s role to a recognized Certifying Authority for the Basic Phase of training for ships, with a dramatic increase in rigor and quantifiable results. This was marked by the first-

ever IW Battle “E” awards.

Solidified the concept of the Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs) as a warfighting platform, standardizing systems, updating guidance and driving toward full certification of every Fleet MOC by 2027.

Launching a pilot program, in collaboration with the surface warfare community, to place more experienced O-4 level IW Department Heads directly onto Destroyers, pairing them with advanced IW equipment to increase capability and lethality.

Vernazza’s message was one of proactive innovation and an unrelenting commitment to maintaining dominance in a rapidly changing battlespace. “To get outcomes we have never had, we must do things we have never done. That is the journey we are on,” he asserted, pointing to a future where IW readiness is paramount.

NAVIFOR’s participation in West 2026 provided a key opportunity to demonstrate how the command is preparing for the future fight. As Vice Adm. Vernazza concluded, “The future of warfare will be won by those who can out-think, out-maneuver, and out-innovate the adversary. Naval Information Forces is ready for that challenge.”

NAVIFOR’s mission is to generate, directly and through our leadership of the IW Enterprise, agile and technically superior manned, trained, equipped, and certified combat-ready IW forces to ensure our Navy will decisively DETER, COMPETE, and WIN.

For more information on NAVIFOR, visit the command Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/NavalInformationForces/> or the public web page at <https://www.navifor.usff.navy.mil>.

PCU John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) Completes Builder's Sea Trials



NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Program Executive Office Aircraft Carriers (PEO CVN) announced the successful completion of Builder's Sea Trials (BST) for the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79), at Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS), a division of HII, in Newport News, Virginia, Feb. 4.

From Naval Sea Systems Command, Feb. 12, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Program Executive Office Aircraft Carriers (PEO CVN) announced the successful completion of Builder's Sea Trials (BST) for the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79), at Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS), a division of HII, in Newport News, Virginia, Feb. 4.

Completion of Builder's Trials marks a significant shipbuilding milestone for the future John F. Kennedy, the

second ship in the Gerald R. Ford-class of aircraft carriers designed to improve survivability, increase lethality, and drive down total ownership cost over their expected 50-year lifespan.

“Seeing this Navy-industry team take CVN 79 to sea for the first time was nothing short of thrilling,” said Rear Adm. Casey Moton, Program Executive Officer for Aircraft Carriers (PEO CVN). “Thanks to the tireless efforts of thousands of proud American workers across the maritime industrial base, we are one step closer to delivering another Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier to the fleet.”

Throughout BST, Sailors from the Pre-Commissioning Unit (PCU) assigned to John F. Kennedy, shipbuilders from NNS, and personnel from the Navy’s Supervisor of Shipbuilding (SUPSHIP), Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), and PEO CVN worked side-by-side testing many of the ship’s key systems and technologies.

Prior to getting underway, John F. Kennedy conducted a five-day “Fast Cruise,” a multi-day pier side training evolution that brings the ship to life prior to getting underway during new construction or after an extended maintenance availability. This simulated underway period exercises the ship’s ability to operate at sea and affords the crew the opportunity to transition to an operational mindset before getting underway.

“There are millions of fingerprints contributing to this successful sea trial, both of the hard-working patriots who built this great ship and of the Sailors who are now bringing her to life,” said Capt. Doug Langenberg, commanding officer of PCU John F. Kennedy (CVN 79). “John F. Kennedy going to sea for the first time is truly momentous. This event is a result of years of hard work and an incredible shared effort between our shipbuilding partners and this crew who have

worked side-by-side to get to this day. I'm proud of this crew and this opportunity to finally take this ship to sea where she belongs."

With the conclusion of Builder's Trials, the team will resume completion work while also addressing any issues identified during trials. The next major milestone for the ship will be Acceptance Trials, the timeline for which is currently under review.

"We're making steady progress towards completion of the ship with all required capability," said Capt. Mark Johnson, Program Manager for Gerald R. Ford-class New Construction. "We continue to work closely with the shipbuilder to ensure that the nation's next aircraft carrier is delivered to the Navy on the fastest possible path to combat readiness."

Navy Public Affairs Renames, Realigns to Deliver More Capable Forces



NORFOLK, Va. (Jan. 9, 2026) – Capt. Sarah T. Self-Kyler, commanding officer of Navy Public Affairs Command (NPAC), left, and Cmdr. Jason S. Fischer, commanding officer of Fleet Public Affairs Center (FLTPACEN) Norfolk, pose for a photo during an establishment ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 9, 2026. The establishment ceremony coincided with the inauguration of Navy Public Affairs Command, formerly Navy Public Affairs Support Element, and is part of a Navy-wide public affairs transformation designed to better align communication efforts with the fleet and to create a more agile and efficient communication force. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Troy Davis)

[by Petty Officer 3rd Class John Farren](#)

NORFOLK, Va. – Marking a significant reorganization of expeditionary public affairs forces, the Navy redesignated Navy Public Affairs Support Element (NPASE) Headquarters as Navy Public Affairs Command (NPAC) and renamed all subordinate units Fleet Public Affairs Centers (FLTPACENS) Jan. 9.

The name changes signify a move from a “support element” to traditional Navy organizational naming nomenclature for units

of such scale and mission.

The headquarters' commanding officer, Capt. Sarah T. Self-Kyler, will continue to oversee the entire enterprise, now as Commander, Navy Public Affairs Command, an echelon II command under the Office of the Chief of Information.

The role of NPAC will remain the Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC) to its seven subordinate FLTPACENs. In addition, NPAC will assume greater authorities to support CHINFO in community-wide policy and programs, including global force management, training programs, and review of equipment.

NPAC will become CHINFO's go-to organization to monitor and assess all PA and VI resources, ensuring efficient alignment of personnel, training across multiple organizations, and deployable equipment to Fleet and Joint requirements.

"NPAC will strengthen our community's ability to more efficiently organize, train, and deploy public affairs professionals across the world, ensuring our communication capabilities are aligned with the demands of modern naval operations," Self-Kyler said.

NPAC's subordinate commands, previously NPASE East, NPASE West, and NPASE Japan, have been redesignated as FLTPACEN Norfolk, FLTPACEN San Diego, and FLTPACEN Yokosuka. FLTPACEN Norfolk will continue to serve as ISIC to FLTPACEN Det Mayport and FLTPACEN Det Rota, while FLTPACEN San Diego will continue to serve as ISIC to FLTPACEN Det Pearl Harbor.

This organizational change establishes two new commanding officer billets—one at FLTPACEN Norfolk and another at FLTPACEN San Diego.

"With 60-plus billeted personnel in Norfolk and San Diego, and dozens more in their subordinate detachments, it was clear that the command authorities should be maintained at the deckplate level where our leaders are overseeing daily

readiness of our deployers and coordinating with CO counterparts at sea,” said Rear Adm. John A. Robinson, Navy Chief of Information. “For the first time, Navy public affairs now has three commanding officers wearing the gold trident-in-wreath pin. This pin may be small, but it is mighty.”

Cmdr. Jason Fischer became the first commanding officer of FLTPACEN, Norfolk during an assumption of command ceremony on Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 9.

Addressing the Sailors and civilians of FLTPACEN Norfolk, Fischer stressed the value of the important work they do.

“You deploy forward, you advise commanders, you illuminate the truth in the fog of information warfare, and you help our Navy—and our nation—understand the meaning and impact of our service,” Fischer said. “Simply put, you ensure the American people see their Navy clearly.”

Cmdr. Jackie Pau became the first commanding officer of FLTPACEN San Diego during its establishment of command ceremony at the “world famous” I Bar onboard Naval Air Station North Island, Jan. 21.

“Fleet Public Affairs Center San Diego is made up of exceptional Sailors who understand the power of storytelling and the responsibility that comes with it, said Pau. “I’m proud to lead a team of warfighters entrusted with telling the Navy’s story with integrity and professionalism.”

During his remarks over each ceremony, Robinson acknowledged the importance of developing strong leadership opportunities within the Navy public affairs community, and emphasized the need for officers with vision, commitment, and a passion for excellence. “We are fortunate to have these highly accomplished leaders at the helm, guiding us into a new era of Navy Public Affairs.”

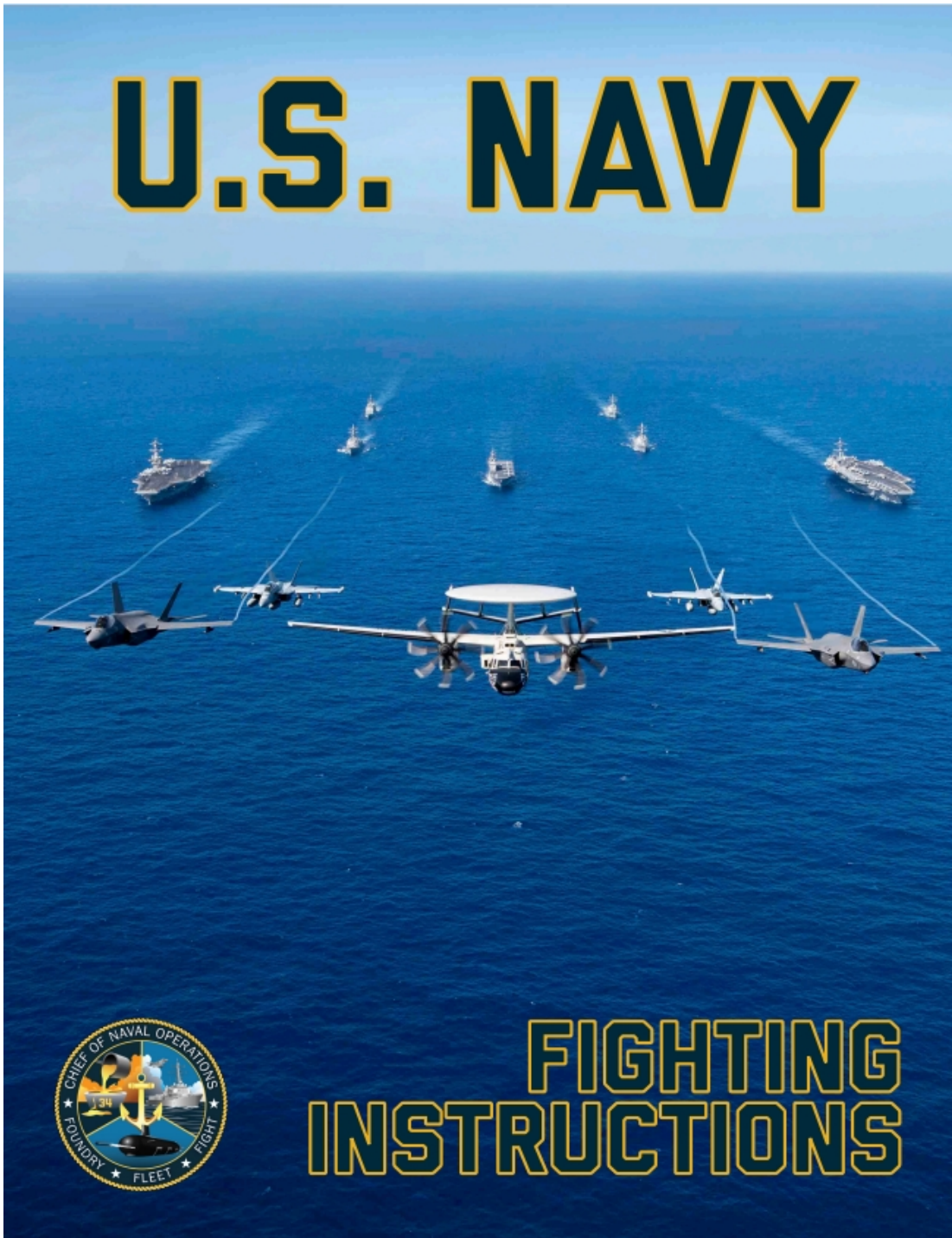
Cmdr. Rochelle Rieger has assumed duties as executive officer

of NPAC.

NPAC's renaming and the establishment of FLTPACENs Norfolk and San Diego represents the Navy's commitment to streamlining communication efforts. By investing in its people and reordering its structure, the Navy is ensuring its public affairs community is a unified, "one team" force that is lethal and succinct.

Chief of Naval Operations Unveils 'Fighting Instructions' at U.S. Naval War College

U.S. NAVY



FIGHTING INSTRUCTIONS

From the Navy's Office of Information, Feb. 9 2026

The Navy's 34th Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Daryl Caudle, today released the [United States Navy Fighting Instructions](#), a comprehensive framework to guide how the Navy organizes, trains, equips, and fights in an increasingly contested global security environment.

Caudle unveiled the document during [remarks at the U.S. Naval War College](#), calling the institution the Navy's "home of

thought” and emphasizing the importance of introducing the guidance to future operational and strategic leaders. The Fighting Instructions introduce the Navy’s “Hedge Strategy” to build repeatable and tailorable processes that produce a Navy that is agile, lethal, and responsive to changes in the global security environment.

Caudle framed the document as the Navy’s answer to a defining challenge of the era: “How do we ensure we can fight and win across the spectrum of conflict, under conditions we cannot entirely predict, against adversaries who are increasingly capable, innovative, and aggressive – at near parity levels – simultaneously in key areas of vital national interest around the world?”

Adapting to a New Strategic Era

In his remarks, Caudle underscored that today’s Navy operates in an era of great power competition marked by rapid technological change, sophisticated adversaries, and mounting strain on the defense industrial base.

“We find ourselves operating in an era with other great powers, an era in which the speed of decision ruthlessly punishes delay,” he said. “The requirement for a strong, resilient, and globally present Navy has never been more important to our Nation’s defense.”

The Hedge Strategy balances high-end warfighting capability with scalable, cost-effective forces able to respond across a wide range of crises and conflicts. Central to this approach are Tailored Forces and Tailored Offsets – scalable, mission-focused combinations of platforms, systems, and capabilities designed to address high-consequence scenarios without constraining overall fleet design. Together, they expand combat mass, improve flexibility, and preserve the Navy’s ability to deliver decisive effects at acceptable levels of

risk.

“Our Navy’s approach to combat can no longer be based on capability overmatch and winning by mass dominance alone,” Caudle said. “The Nation needs a Navy that can hedge lethal effects aggressively, innovate continuously, fight distributivity, and command with clarity across a global network of battlespaces.”

Caudle also noted that the strategy complements national efforts to grow and modernize the Fleet, including the president’s Golden Fleet initiative, which underscores the importance of a larger, more capable Navy supported by a resilient maritime industrial base.

Sailors at the Center

Throughout the guidance, Caudle emphasized that Sailors remain the Navy’s decisive advantage.

“At the center of this vision will always be the United States Navy Sailor,” he said. “They are our most enduring strategic advantage, our primary weapon system, and the heartbeat of our world-class Navy.”

Quoting the late Adm. Hyman G. Rickover, the Father of the Nuclear Navy, Caudle closed by reinforcing the need for action over rhetoric.

“The great end of life is not knowledge, but action,” he said. “Through disciplined execution and a clear-eyed approach, we will defend our country, deter our adversaries, and preserve our place as the most formidable fighting force the world has ever known.”

The full text of the U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions can be downloaded at the following link:

REMUS 100 Completes 935 Missions with Only Two Days of Downtime



From HII

NEUNHAM TAS, Australia, Feb. 10, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – The Australian Maritime College (AMC) and HII (NYSE: HII) today announced a major reliability milestone for AMC's Legacy REMUS 100 autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV).

Over seven years, the AMC REMUS 100 completed 935 operational deployments with only two days of downtime caused by material issues. During this period the AUV supported the training of

more than 400 Royal Australian Navy AUV operators.

Despite frequent use in challenging environments, the system maintained operational availability above 99.9%, which is a standout result for autonomous maritime technology.

This performance record reinforces the REMUS 100's reputation as one of the most dependable autonomous underwater systems operating today. In 2026, HII REMUS will celebrate 25 years of reliable, innovative service to customers worldwide. To date, more than 750 REMUS AUVs have been delivered to customers in over 30 countries, with more than 90% still in active service.

The legacy REMUS 100 is a versatile, reliable, and easy-to-maintain system that played an important role in oceanographic research, environmental monitoring, and defence operations around the world.

Since the arrival of the REMUS100 at the AMC the vehicle has been maintained in-house by staff at the AMC's Autonomous Maritime Systems Laboratory in Northern Tasmania, with remote support provided directly from HII technical staff in the U.S.

"This reliability record is an outstanding testament to both the REMUS 100's robust engineering and technical expertise of the AMC team who maintain and operate the vehicle," said Chris White, AMCS manager of Defence & Autonomous Systems. "To sustain such high performance across hundreds of missions and diverse marine conditions is a reflection of both the system's design integrity and the autonomous system technical skills resident at the AMC."

"The REMUS 100's reliability has enabled the AMC to plan and execute complex missions with full confidence in the system. This level of dependability has a direct impact on mission success, data quality and training outcomes." said Duane Fotheringham, president of HII's Unmanned Systems. "Its

performance record reinforces HII's commitment to delivering innovative, reliable, and upgradeable mission-ready autonomous underwater systems that set industry standards for performance and durability."

Lightfish Unmanned Vessel First Joint Maritime Launch



By [U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs](#), Feb. 10, 2026

VICTORIA, Seychelles – Commander Task Force (CTF) 66 launched a Lightfish Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) for the first time off a partner nation's vessel during Cutlass Express 2026 off the coast of the Indian Ocean, Feb. 9.

The launch was part of an unmanned systems training event with

the Seychelles Navy, designed to test the Lightfish USV abilities in open ocean with limited connection.

“We are making history at Cutlass Express 2026 by demonstrating our enhanced warfighting skills through our robotic and unmanned capabilities alongside our maritime partners,” said Lt. Bryna Loranger, CTF 66 Operations Officer. “6th Fleet is seeking new ways to build partner maritime domain awareness capabilities during this exercise by promoting interoperability. Through sharing and experimenting with Seychelles Coast Guard assets and infrastructure, we are enhancing our expeditionary robotic autonomous systems capabilities in the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility.”

CTF 66 is a fully uncrewed task force that uses advanced technologies, like artificial intelligence, to help U.S. 6th Fleet and its partners move faster to maintain a strong presence across Africa’s maritime zones while detecting illegal activity.

CTF 66 is leading the U.S. Navy in innovating its approach to warfighting during an age where information systems, technology, and vulnerabilities in the global economy are being weaponized by adversaries operating in the grey-zone outside the domain of traditional warfare.

“Through exercises like Cutlass Express 2026, we are adapting alongside our partners by integrating unmanned tactics directly into operations,” said Rear Adm. Kelly Ward, Commander, Task Force 66. “We are leaning into this domain hand-in-hand with our partners, translating innovation into warfighting readiness and enhancing maritime security to protect freedom of navigation.”

Cutlass Express 2026 has 19 partners and allies working together through a series of shore-based training events. Cutlass Express provides all participating nations an

opportunity to work side-by-side to synchronize and rehearse real-world scenarios that will include visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) and maritime interdiction training, counter-illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing procedures, and medical training.

Established in May 2024, CTF 66 is U.S. 6th Fleet's first all-domain task force designed to integrate Robotic and Autonomous Systems (RAS) with naval, joint and NATO partners in the European and African theaters of operations. Since its establishment, the task force drives to innovate and develop unmanned technologies to enhance the way militaries integrate naval platforms across all domains, all enabled by this emerging technology.

CTF 66 currently maintains 22 USVs, however the task force is expecting to double its lethality as additional assets reach operational readiness in the near future. These USVs provide precise maritime domain awareness and serve as force multipliers. This enhanced technology forces adversaries to overextend their defenses and in positions to face complex strategic dilemmas.

Exercises like Cutlass Express 2026 allow CTF 66 to leverage strong collaboration with partners and allied nations to operate large numbers of unmanned systems at scale. These partnerships allow the task force to pre-position and deploy assets into host countries ahead of time using the 'deploy to employ' approach, while guaranteeing its immediate readiness in the area of operations.

CTF 66 and their USVs will continue to enhance deterrence, lethality and capabilities within the European and African theaters of operations.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (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.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.

CENTCOM Commander Visits Aircraft Carrier in Arabian Sea



U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, departs Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in the Arabian Sea, Feb. 7, 2026. Abraham Lincoln is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations to support maritime security and stability in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Angel Campbell)

[From U.S. Central Command](#)

TAMPA, Fla. – The commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) visited USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Feb. 7, as it transited the Arabian Sea during a scheduled deployment.

Adm. Brad Cooper visited crew members aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with U.S. Special Envoy for Peace Missions Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Cooper expressed his gratitude for their service.

“I join the American people in expressing our incredible pride in the Sailors and Marines of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group,” said Cooper. “Their dedication to the mission and professionalism are on full display here in the Middle East as they demonstrate U.S. military readiness and strength.”

Based in San Diego, Abraham Lincoln departed for deployment in November and operated in the Indo-Pacific region before arriving in the Middle East in January.

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group consists of aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln; the embarked staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9; guided-missile destroyers USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112); and more than 60 fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

The strike group is operating in the CENTCOM area of responsibility to support maritime security and stability in

the region.

Israel MOD Signs \$130M Deal with Elbit Systems to Integrate Israeli Systems on CH-53Ks



[Release From Elbit Systems](#)

As part of the preparations for receiving the CH-53K "Pereh" helicopters, the Defense Procurement Directorate (DPD) within the Israel Ministry of Defense (IMOD) has signed a deal with Elbit Systems to integrate advanced Israeli technologies, including command and control, avionics, and electronic warfare systems, and the advanced anti-missile [DIRCM system](#), on the 12 new helicopters expected to replace the IDF's aging "Yas'ur" helicopters. The deal, led by the Deputy Director of the DPD for Air and Sea Procurement, is valued at approximately \$130 million (over NIS 400 million).

The CH-53K helicopters were purchased through a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreement signed several years ago between the IMOD and the U.S. government. The helicopters are manufactured by Lockheed Martin-Sikorsky and are currently in the assembly process at the main production facility in Connecticut.

Upon completion of assembly, the helicopters are expected to move to a dedicated installation and production line established for adapting the American-configuration helicopters to Israeli systems tailored to the operational requirements defined by the Israeli Air Force (IAF). The integration of Israeli systems is expected to enhance the cockpit environment, enable flight in challenging conditions, and support the identification of safe landing zones and obstacles.

Defense Minister Israel Katz: "This deal marks a major milestone in strengthening the IDF and securing the Israeli Air Force's operational edge for years ahead. Integrating cutting-edge Israeli systems into the world's most advanced heavy-lift helicopter ensures these platforms are fully adapted to Israel's unique combat requirements. We remain committed to advancing domestic 'blue-and-white' defense production and incorporating Israeli industries into strategic programs, ensuring production independence, supply continuity, and operational superiority for our forces."

IMOD Director General Maj. Gen. (Res.) Amir Baram: “The CH-53K helicopters are a key part of the multi-year procurement program the Ministry is pursuing alongside the IDF for fighter squadrons, helicopters, tankers, and various armaments that will define the IDF’s force structure for the coming decade and beyond. Integrating Israeli technologies into the world’s most advanced heavy-lift helicopter demonstrates the technological edge of Israel’s defense industries and the significant potential of incorporating Israeli systems into cutting-edge aircraft platforms.”

Elbit Systems President and CEO, Bezhael (Butzi) Machlis: “We are honored to take part in the flagship project to upgrade the helicopter fleet and to support the complex needs of the Air Force, through Elbit’s most advanced systems, which will be integrated into the new CH-53K helicopters. These systems, representing the forefront of Elbit’s proven technology, are tailored to the Air Force’s requirements and provide an optimal advanced technological envelope for mission execution and for ensuring pilot safety.”

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11 Returns to Indo-Pacific



[From Petty Officer 2nd Class Alexa Trafton, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11](#)

OKINAWA, Japan – Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11 completed Relief-in-Place / Transfer-of-Authority (RIPTOA) with NMCB-4, returning to the U.S. Indo-Pacific area of responsibility (INDOPACOM) for the first time in more than a decade. This deployment marks a significant milestone for the East Coast-based Seabee battalion and reinforcing U.S. Navy expeditionary construction capabilities in the region.

The battalion's presence at Camp Shields represents both a strategic operational posture and a symbolic return to a place deeply rooted in NMCB-11's heritage. Camp Shields is named for Marvin G. Shields, the battalion's namesake and the only Seabee to be awarded the Medal of Honor, whose legacy continues to define the spirit and mission of "Lucky Eleven."

"Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11's return to the U.S. Indo-Pacific area of responsibility, and especially to Camp

Shields, represents both a strategic posture and a symbolic homecoming,” said the battalion’s commanding officer, Capt. James Angerman. “Not only for an East Coast battalion, but for NMCB-11 specifically.”

From its base in Okinawa, NMCB-11 will operate across multiple detachment sites throughout INDOPACOM, providing expeditionary construction, general engineering and force-protection capabilities in direct support of U.S. Navy, joint and coalition forces. The deployment positions the battalion to rapidly respond to operational requirements while enhancing readiness across the theater.

“Camp Shields, named after Marvin G. Shields, nods to an important piece of history for NMCB-11, and serving from this location reinforces the legacy of Seabee excellence that defines Lucky Eleven,” said Angerman. “From Okinawa and our detachment sites around INDOPACOM, we are positioned to rapidly project expeditionary construction, general engineering and force-protection capabilities in direct support of the fleet and joint forces.”

The return of NMCB-11 to the Indo-Pacific comes at a critical time for regional security and cooperation. The battalion’s mission emphasizes interoperability with Allies and partners while supporting contingency operations, exercises and infrastructure development throughout the area of responsibility.

The presence of the battalion in INDOPACOM underscores the enduring role of Seabees in delivering combat-ready engineering solutions and sustaining the Navy’s forward-deployed forces, while honoring a legacy forged in the same region decades ago.

NMCB-11 is forward deployed under Commander, Task Force 75, which executes command and control of assigned Naval Expeditionary Combat Forces across the 7th Fleet area of

operations to defend U.S. allied and partner interest.

NSWCDD Delivers Next- Generation MK 38 Defense System



SOUTH CHINA SEA – Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin (DDG 89) fires its MK 38 25 mm gun during a live-fire drill in 2015. The weapon has since been upgraded to MK 38 MOD 4, which employs a 30 mm gun and integrates with the Aegis Combat System. (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN David Flewellyn)

By Tierney Kunstmann, NSWCDD Corporate Communications, Feb 6, 2026

DAHLGREN, Va. – For decades, the MK 38 family – a key Navy shipboard weapon system – has delivered reliable close-in defense against small, fast, agile threats at sea.

Since its commissioning in 1977 to protect warships primarily from surface threats, the platform has continually evolved – extending its reach, improving precision and adapting to counter a full spectrum of modern maritime dangers.

Now, that evolution has taken another significant leap.

As technical design agent, Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division has led the development of the system's latest upgrade to the MK 38 family – the Mod 4 – which fully integrates the gun with the Aegis Combat System and strengthens defense against unmanned aerial systems and high-speed, maneuverable unmanned surface vehicles. The Mod 4 also delivers the weapon's first caliber increase in more than 30 years, from 25 mm to 30 mm. With NSWCDD's connection to Aegis, merging the two was a natural progression and allowed for a smoother transition.

“It is going to greatly improve the ship's ability to counter modern threats,” said Danny Mudd, technical program lead for MK 38 MOD 4. “With the added caliber, we can reach farther and deliver more damage.”

A proven line of defense

By 1977, the Navy's long serving 20 mm MK 16 gun had become difficult to maintain. It was also no longer practical; it didn't use the standard NATO ammunition of the time. It needed an upgrade.

The Chief of Naval Operations directed the development of what became the original MK 38 system, built around the 25 mm MK 242 Bushmaster chain gun – a fully power-operated weapon mounted on the MK 88 support structure. This combination set the standard for modern naval close-in

defense, making the MK 38 a more capable, responsive and reliable weapon than previous manually operated or smaller-caliber systems.

Rising tensions in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s accelerated the production and deployment of the MK 38 MOD 1 on various combatant and auxiliary ships and the weapon saw its first operational use during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

While the first mods had addressed a critical gap, the U.S. Navy recognized that there was room for improvement. The MK 38 MOD 2 upgrade transformed the mount into the Typhoon Weapon System, which introduced remote-control operation and mount stabilization and allowed the weapon to maintain aim even as the ship pitched and rolled. It also added a new electro-optical/infrared sensor and a laser rangefinder, giving the system reliable day/night target performance. Beyond sensors, Mod 2 brought improved ammunition handling and enhanced interfaces – resulting in faster and more reliable engagement. Testing showed it delivered two to three times the strike accuracy of its predecessor.

The next upgrade, MK 38 MOD 3 fielded in 2017, advanced the design by introducing an optional 7.62 mm coaxial chain gun with as many as 750 ready rounds, more than four times the capacity of the Mod 2. It also incorporated an improved E0/IR sensor that provides 330-degree surveillance capability and multiple fields of view. This sensor is decoupled from the gun, allowing operators to scan independently of the weapon and reducing the chance of alerting an adversary that they've been detected.

Meeting evolving threats

The newest upgrade, the MK 38 MOD 4, features several improvements. At its core is the Northrop Grumman MK 44 Bushmaster II 30 mm gun – now capable of employing air-burst

munitions – integrated with the MK 48 MOD 2 electro-optical sight system and the MK 134 MOD 0 operator console. This setup transforms the MK 38 MOD 4 into a smarter, more powerful and more precise weapon system, capable of handling modern threats that older guns couldn't reliably engage.

An optional 12.7 mm coaxial heavy machine gun further expands engagement options and improves responsiveness against a range of threats. The new sensor is fully stabilized and off mount, enabling better accuracy tracking and clearer imagery in challenging visibility.

A July 2022 test on NSWCDD's Potomac River Test Range successfully identified, tracked and engaged both surface and aerial targets using live ammunition against fixed and moving targets. It also highlighted the enhanced fire-control chain, the 30 mm gun's improved performance and its ability to counter new challenges.

USS Mustin (DDG 89), an Arleigh Burke-class Aegis guided missile destroyer, was the first U.S. Navy warship to receive the upgrade. Dahlgren Division is now finalizing the configuration so the system can be introduced to a wider set of platforms as fleet requirements evolve.

"We're tracking the emergence of new threats, now including airborne ones, and adapting accordingly," Mudd said. "The Mod 4 is designed to deliver greater lethality across a wider range of targets, strengthening overall ship defense and giving us the edge we need."

Editor's note: This story is part of an ongoing series exploring the capabilities and developments of the Aegis Combat System. Read the first installment [here](#).