

Flag Officer Announcements

[Release from the Department of Defense](#)

APRIL 24, 2023

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president has made the following nominations:

Navy Vice Adm. Charles B. Cooper II for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as deputy commander, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Cooper is currently serving as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command; commander, Fifth Fleet; and commander, Combined Maritime Forces, Manama, Bahrain.

Navy Rear Adm. Yvette M. Davids for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. Davids is currently serving as director, Learning to Action Board, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Adm. Christopher S. Gray for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as commander, Navy Installations Command, Washington, D.C. Gray is currently serving as commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Rear Adm. John E. Gumbleton for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as deputy commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia. Gumbleton is currently serving as deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for Budget; and director, Fiscal Management Division, N82, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Admiral Brendan R. McLane for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as commander, Naval

Surface Forces; and commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, San Diego, California. McLane is currently serving as commander, Naval Surface Force, Atlantic, Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Rear Adm. James E. Pitts for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Requirements and Capabilities, N9, Office of the Chief of Naval Operation, Washington, D.C. Pitts is currently serving as director, Warfighting Integration, N9I, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

MQ-9B SEAGUARDIAN® FEATURED IN US NAVY'S GROUP SAIL EXERCISE



[Release from General Atomics – Aeronautical Systems](#)

International

SAN DIEGO – 25 April 2023 – The U.S. Navy’s Group Sail Exercise, held over a six-day period in Hawaiian military operating areas, featured one of the world’s most advanced Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) – the MQ-9B SeaGuardian® supplied by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI). SeaGuardian conducted Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (MISR), Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Long Range Fires, and simulated Battle Damage Assessment as part of Group Sail, which supported Carrier Strike Groups FIFTEEN and ONE.

During the exercise, which ran April 12-17, 2023, SeaGuardian integrated with U.S. Navy ships (carriers, cruisers, and destroyers) and aircraft (F-35C, F/A-18, EA-18G, E-2D, MH-60, and P-8) to support various naval missions that included Maritime Domain Awareness, Surface Warfare, Information Warfare, and numerous time-sensitive targeting objectives and simulated Battle Damage Assessments.

“We were thrilled that the U.S. Navy requested SeaGuardian be part of the Group Sail training event,” said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. “We know the many successes of SeaGuardian during the USN’s RIMPAC 2022 exercise was a big reason the SeaGuardian was invited back to Hawaii to support Group Sail.”

In addition to its contributions during Group Sail, the SeaGuardian self-deployed from GA-ASI’s Desert Horizons flight operations facility in El Mirage, Calif., to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, covering over 2,500 nautical miles in a single flight and demonstrating SeaGuardian’s unrivalled expeditionary attributes. The aircraft self-deployed back to El Mirage following the exercise.

CNO Travels to New England Shipyards with Congressional Delegation; Emphasizes Value of Shipyards to the Navy



[Release from the CNO Public Affairs](#)

24 April 2023

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD, Maine – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday traveled to Bath, and Kittery, Maine, where he and congressional leaders visited General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS), April 24.

In Bath, Gilday met with Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King, and together they visited shipyard facilities, toured the Orion Training Academy, and met with Sailors aboard the future USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120).

“Our partnership with industry is critical to our Navy and our national security... we must continue to build ships, submarines and aircraft to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow,” said Gilday. “I’m grateful for the work and the improvements being made at Bath Iron Works to ensure our warfighters continue to receive cutting edge capabilities and extraordinary ships.”

At the shipyard, Gilday and the congressional delegation met with Bath Iron Works President Mr. Chuck Krugh and other BIW executives. The leaders discussed challenges of the shipyard, as well as workforce and programmatic improvements across the company.

Aboard Levin, Gilday met with the ship’s command triad and presented awards to Sailors.

“It is a great opportunity to visit the crew of the future USS Carl M. Levin for a second time, and see how far the ship has come in a year,” said Gilday. “A ship is nothing without the crew, and I am confident the USS Carl M. Levin will do great things for our nation because of these incredible Sailors.”

Following his visit to BIW, Gilday traveled to Kittery to visit Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and was accompanied by Collins and Sen. Maggie Hassan. Throughout the visit, they spoke with personnel and toured one of the facilities the Navy uses to overhaul, repair, and modernize its submarine fleet.

CNO was met by PNS leadership, who accompanied him as he met with Sailors, received a Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) overview, and toured the yard.

“SIOP is critically important to the future success of our

shipyards and force; this once-in-a-century effort is essential to Navy readiness and our budget request reflects that," said Gilday. "Everyone here at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is a part of the Navy team and has an important role in making sure our nation maintains the strongest Navy in the world."

After his briefs, CNO toured PNS's reactor servicing complex and dry dock areas.

The visit marked Gilday's third trip to Bath Iron Works and his second to Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Reassure and Deter: George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group Completes Historic Deployment



[Release from U.S. Second Fleet](#)

23 April 2023

NORFOLK – The George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (CSG) – comprised of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55), and the Information Warfare Commander – returned to Norfolk, April 23.

The strike group arrived in the European theater in August of last year, projecting U.S. and Allied power and deterring aggression by training and operating with allies and partners for nearly eight months.

Further showcasing the U.S.'s ironclad commitment to NATO, George H.W. Bush CSG hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg while under NATO command for the vigilance activity Neptune Strike (NEST) 22.2.

“This carrier sends a powerful message of Allied deterrence every day,” Stoltenberg said during his visit. “A perfect example of the transatlantic bond – Europe and North America working together in NATO.”

Stoltenberg said the George H.W. Bush CSG’s participation in the vigilance activity demonstrated our ability to rapidly reinforce our Allies and project power across the Alliance.

He added, “NATO’s strength helps to prevent any miscalculation by sending a clear message: NATO will protect and defend every inch of Allied territory.”

In addition to NEST 22.2 and NEST 23.1, the strike group played a key role in major events with allies and partners throughout deployment including:

- dual and tri-carrier operations five times in theater with ESPS Juan Carlos I, ITS Cavour, and the French Carrier Strike Group with FS Charles de Gaulle;
- exercise Mare Aperto 22-2;
- exercise Juniper Oak, the largest U.S.-Israeli military exercise in history in support of U.S. Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet while assigned to U.S. 6th Fleet;
- exercise Hemex Orion;
- exercise Dynamic Manta;

- shipboard exercises and events with ITS Caio Duilio, HRV Dubrovnik, ALS Butrinti and ALS Lissus, ITS Carabiniere, ITS Virginio Fasan, and TCG Gungor Durmas;
- two iterations of the Spanish Tactical Leadership Program (TLP) for Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7 personnel;
- the Athens International Air Show;
- the EURONAVAL Trade Show in Paris;
- Thirty-five key leader engagements, five major receptions and protocol events in Crete, Croatia, Italy, France, and Greece which included more approximately

1,536 visitors to the aircraft carrier alone;

- and multiple press conferences in NATO port visits to reassure host nation audiences and reinforce existing relationships for future maritime operations and international stability

Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander, George H.W. Bush CSG, and his major commanders and subordinate units continuously engaged senior military and civilian leaders throughout the region to increase unity of effort within the Alliance through 21st Century Maritime Diplomacy.

“Since the beginning of our Navy, we have been seagoing diplomats. I have operated that way throughout my entire career, and our Sailors represented U.S. and Allied interests incredibly well throughout deployment,” Velez said. “The trust our strike group built with our Allies and partners is our competitive advantage as an Alliance. Our teamwork increased our collective capability and deterred our adversaries, which I believe helped prevent expansion of war into NATO territory.”

George H.W. Bush is the flagship of CSG-10, George H.W. Bush CSG. CSG-10 is comprised of George H.W. Bush, CVW-7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Information Warfare Commander, and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55).

The ships of DESRON-26 completing deployment with CSG-10 are the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Nitze (DDG 94), USS Truxtun (DDG 103), and USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119).

The squadrons of CVW-7 embarked aboard the George H.W. Bush are the “Sidewinders” of VFA-86, the “Jolly Rogers” of VFA-103, the “Knighthawks” of VFA-136, the “Pukin Dogs” of

VFA-143, the “Bluetails” of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 121, the “Patriots” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140, the “Nightdippers” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5, and the “Grandmasters” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 46.

AUSTAL USA CHRISTENS FUTURE USS KINGSVILLE (LCS 36)



[Release from Austal USA](#)

April 22, 2023

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA celebrated the christening of the

future USS Kingsville (LCS 36) Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship in a ceremony at the company's Gulf Coast shipyard today. Ship sponsor Katherine L. Kline performed the ceremonial bottle break over the bow of Kingsville, the 18th LCS designed and constructed by Austal USA.

Kline is a member of the sixth generation of the King Ranch Family, decedents of Captain Richard King who founded the King Ranch located in Kingsville, Texas in 1853. Her father, Lieutenant Commander Richard Sugden, was a Navy flight surgeon.

LCS 36 is the first U.S. Navy ship named for Kingsville. The town, born from the need for an efficient railroad service connecting Brownsville, Texas to St. Louis, Mo., was founded in 1904, after Captain King's wife, Henrietta, deeded 40,000 acres from the King Ranch to be available for the development of the Kingsville townsite. The Kingsville community remains vital to the agribusiness of south Texas and maintains a special relationship with Naval Air Station Kingsville.

"It is an honor and privilege to serve as the sponsor of the future USS Kingsville," stated Kline. "I am so proud of the significant role that the namesake city has played in our nation's security throughout its long history. I know the ship will carry that legacy of service forward as she and her crew enter the fleet to proudly serve our Navy and our Nation."

The ceremony was widely attended by community and Navy leaders, Austal USA shipbuilders, and the ship's commanding officer Cmdr. Ludwig Mann III.

"It is said that a ship's sponsor infuses her spirit into each new ship, providing her strength and inspiration to those who serve aboard her throughout the ship's service life," stated Austal USA President Rusty Murdaugh. "We know that Katherine will do a great job as sponsor of Kingsville but also know that the pride and values of those who worked so hard to build

her, have laid a solid foundation for her to build upon.”

Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ships are fast, optimally-manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats.

Kingsville is planned for delivery in early 2024 and will be homeported in San Diego, Calif., where Austal USA will have the capability to dry-dock and provide lifecycle sustainment support for the Independence-variant ship class and other similar sized ships at its waterfront repair facility.

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**Prospective 64th Naval
Academy Superintendent**

Nominated



Release from the Navy Chief of Information

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Rear Adm. Yvette Davids was nominated for

appointment to the rank of vice admiral and assignment as the next superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.

Davids, a 1989 graduate of the Naval Academy, was nominated by Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday.

She is a career surface warfare officer and is currently serving as Director, Learning to Action Drive Team. Davids has an extensive operational background to include commanding USS Curts (FFG 38), USS Bunker Hill (CG 52), and Carrier Strike Group 11.

Her assignment to Curts made her the first Hispanic American woman to command a Navy warship. For this milestone, Davids was a 2008 recipient of the Mexican American Women's National Association's Las Primeras Award for Latinas who demonstrate important 'firsts' in their fields with a national impact.

Pending confirmation by the U.S. Senate, her change of command in summer 2023 at the U.S. Naval Academy would mark the first time a woman has assumed the role of USNA Superintendent.

For more information about Davids, visit <https://www.navy.mil/Leadership/Flag-Officer-Biographies/BioDisplay/Article/2236396/rear-admiral-yvette-davids/>.

For more information about the Naval Academy, visit: www.usna.edu or our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/USNavalAcademy) page at www.facebook.com/USNavalAcademy.

Navy to Christen Future U.S. Navy Ship Kingsville



[Release from the Department of Defense](#)

APRIL 21, 2023

The Navy will christen and launch the newest Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship, the future USS Kingsville (LCS 36), during a 10:00 a.m. CST ceremony on Saturday, April 23, in Mobile, Alabama.

The principal speaker, the Honorable Franklin Parker, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for manpower and reserve affairs, will deliver the ceremonial principal address. Remarks will also be provided by the Honorable Sam Fugate, mayor of Kingsville; Rear Adm. Fred Pyle, director, Surface Warfare Division, office of the Chief of Naval Operations; Mr. Rusty Murdaugh, president, Austal USA; and Mr. Stan Kordana, vice president of Surface Systems, General Dynamics Mission Systems. Ms. Katherine Kline will break a bottle of sparkling

wine across the bow to symbolically christen the ship. Ms. Kline is a member of the sixth generation of the King Ranch family, descendants of steamboat Capt. Richard King who founded the King Ranch located in Kingsville, Texas, in 1853. Naval Air Station Kingsville, located three miles from Kingsville, was founded in 1942 and continues a special relationship with the King Ranch.

“USS Kingsville highlights not only the city of Kingsville and Naval Air Station Kingsville, but also shows the efforts of two communities working together for the betterment of the nation,” said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. “As we christen her today, I look forward to seeing the work that the officers and crew of USS Kingsville will do.”

Kingsville is the 18th Independence-variant LCS and is the first ship named after Kingsville, Texas.

The Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) class are fast, optimally-manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. LCSs integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

The LCS class consists of two variants, Freedom and Independence, designed and built by two separate industry teams. The Independence-variant team is led by Austal USA (for the even-numbered hulls, e.g. LCS 2).

Media may direct queries to the Navy Office of Information at (703) 697-5342. More information on the Littoral Combat Ship Program can be found at:
<https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Fact-Files/Display-FactFiles/Article/2171607/littoral-combat-ship-class-lcs/>.

DoD Releases Fiscal Year 2022 Freedom of Navigation Report



[Release from the Department of Defense](#)

APRIL 21, 2023

Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) released its annual Freedom of Navigation (FON) Report for Fiscal Year 2022. During the period from October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, U.S. forces operationally challenged 22 different excessive maritime claims made by 15 different claimants throughout the world.

Excessive maritime claims are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. They include a variety of restrictions on the exercise of navigation and overflight rights and other freedoms. Unlawful maritime claims – or incoherent theories of maritime entitlements – pose a threat to the legal foundation of the rules-based international order. If left unchallenged, excessive maritime claims could limit the rights and freedoms enjoyed by every nation.

Upholding freedom of navigation as a principle supports unimpeded lawful commerce and the global mobility of U.S. forces. DoD's freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

DoD's regular and routine operational challenges complements diplomatic engagements by the U.S. State Department and supports the longstanding U.S. national interest in freedom of the seas worldwide.

Each year, DoD releases an unclassified summarized FON Report identifying the broad range of excessive maritime claims that are challenged by U.S. forces. It also includes general geographic information to describe the location of FON assertions while still maintaining operational security of U.S. military forces. This report demonstrates U.S. non-acquiescence to excessive maritime claims –wherever they may be.

As long as restrictions on navigation and overflight rights and freedoms that exceed the authority provided under international law persist, the United States will continue to challenge such unlawful maritime claims.

The United States will uphold the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea for the benefit of all nations—and will stand with like-minded partners doing the same.

DoD FON Reports are available at <http://policy.defense.gov/0USDPOffices/FON.aspx>.

U.S. Navy Ship Patrolling Middle East Seizes \$42 Million in Drugs



[Release from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command / U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs](#)

21 April 2023

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer interdicted a fishing vessel attempting to smuggle \$42 million

in illegal drugs while transiting the Gulf of Oman, April 21.

USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) was operating in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 when it discovered the fishing vessel smuggling 802 kilograms of methamphetamine and 1,000 kilograms of hashish. CTF 150 is one of four task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, a multinational naval partnership consisting of 38 nations.

Before U.S. Navy and Coast Guard members from Paul Hamilton seized the vessel, five smugglers on board attempted to discard 50 bags of methamphetamine weighing 35 pounds each by throwing the drugs overboard. Some of the bags were able to be recovered from the water.

The vessel's crewmembers identified themselves as Iranian nationals.

"This was outstanding work by the entire Paul Hamilton team," said Capt. Anthony Webber, commander of Task Force 55 and responsible for overseeing U.S. maritime surface operations in the Middle East. "These interdictions remove illicit narcotics from the high seas and help deter destabilizing activity in regional waters."

In 2023, maritime forces supporting CTF 150 have seized illegal drugs worth a combined estimated U.S. street value of \$150 million, adding to record-breaking drug interdictions by U.S. and international naval units in 2021 and 2022 totaling \$1 billion in value.

"I am incredibly pleased with the performance of our Sailors," said Cmdr. Jake Ferrari, commanding officer of Paul Hamilton. "We remain committed to delivering consistent maritime security and countering illicit activities and contraband smuggling in the region."

CTF 150 conducts maritime security and counter-terrorism operations in the Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean to disrupt criminal and terrorist organizations and their related illicit activities, including the movement of personnel, weapons, narcotics and charcoal. These efforts help ensure legitimate commercial shipping transits the region free from non-state threats.

Combined Maritime Forces is the largest multinational naval partnership in the world whose partner forces operate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf to promote regional security and stability.