From MRAP to MADIS: Legacy of Innovation Endures at NIWC Atlantic

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (January 13, 2026) Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Atlantic's Expeditionary Warfare (ExW) Department personnel work on integrating Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) software, components and weapons onto Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs) at the command's Vehicle Integration Facility on Jan. 13, 2026. The engineers and computer scientists are part of the ExW Department's Counter Threat Platforms team that for over a year now has been helping to field the drone-defeating MADIS capability to Marines at the 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School. (U.S. Navy photo by Joe Bullinger/Released)

By Steve Ghiringhelli, NIWC Atlantic Public Affairs, March 10, 2026

As one of the Navy's top labs in systems integration, NIWC Atlantic engineering and ingrained innovation culture continue to deliver information warfare-dominant platforms that make the Naval and Joint Force more connected, resilient and lethal.

CHARLESTON, S.C. – Throughout 2025, Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Atlantic helped deliver the drone-defeating Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) to the Marine Corps, shepherding a critical breakthrough in air defense technology that significantly improves warfighter survivability and lethality.

The MADIS system, which is mounted on two Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs), detects aerial threats and defeats them with a 30mm cannon, Stinger missiles and electronic warfare capabilities.

"As one of the Navy's top labs in systems integration, NIWC Atlantic collaborates with industry partners to adopt the latest software and engineering innovations and quickly turn them into information-dominant platforms," said Erick Fry, NIWC Atlantic acting executive director. "In the case of MADIS, our Expeditionary Warfare (ExW) Department very rapidly delivered a capability to U.S. Marines that defeats low-altitude threats and makes the Naval and Joint Force more connected, resilient and lethal."

The effort began in 2022, when ExW Department engineers used commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) components and leveraged the command's On Demand Manufacturing Lab to outfit JLTVs with the necessary weapons, sensors, radar and other equipment to complete MADIS Increment 1.0 in less than one year's time. The capability then matured through rigorous tests and trials before fielding to Marines at the 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion and the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School in late 2024 and throughout 2025.

Fry said MADIS is one of many examples at NIWC Atlantic that builds upon the command's historic successes in working with the Marine Corps and industry partners to rapidly innovate, prototype and integrate command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) components onto warfighting platforms like the JLTV.

"NIWC Atlantic engineers modernize and streamline the complex work of systems integration each time they iterate," Fry said. "I couldn't be prouder of their accomplishments and continued advances on the innovation front."

'Speed of MRAP'

A triumph still remembered today for its rapid warfighter response is NIWC Atlantic's C4ISR integration of thousands of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan, an effort that began in 2008 and ended up blasting through slow bureaucratic processes to save countless lives.

Last November, Secretary of War Peter Hegseth invoked the MRAP effort during a speech he delivered at the National War College announcing sweeping reforms in how the Department of War (DOW) will procure warfighting capabilities. With the current backdrop of a complex and ever-evolving threat environment, the Secretary stressed an urgency to move at "the speed of MRAP."

"Our objective is simple—transform the entire acquisition system to operate on a wartime footing," he told the crowd.

For a warfare center like NIWC Atlantic, rapidly integrating commercial products and information technologies onto mission-ready platforms is job No. 1.

But speed and government are not often synonymous.

Nevertheless, NIWC Atlantic has long been a driver for disrupting the status quo to gain greater flexibilities to navigate the complex world of military acquisitions. From MRAP to MADIS, NIWC Atlantic has rapidly delivered capabilities to provide warfighters speed, connectivity, lethality and survivability, despite the roadblocks.

For example, when the JLTV first entered the U.S. military, the ExW Department overcame strict size, weight and power limitations to integrate components like sensors, jammers, advanced radio systems, battle-management software and communications equipment onto four distinct JLTV variants. Eventually, the department would field more than 5,000 of the high-tech vehicles to the Marine Corps and another 17,000 JLTVs to the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Today, the JLTV and its advanced onboard suite of C4ISR services is considered by many a cornerstone platform of Marine Corps modernization in protected and expeditionary vehicles.

More recently, the ExW Department began integrating the new Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), the Marine Corps' next-generation, amphibious transport that will replace the older Assault Amphibious Vehicles.

"NIWC Atlantic is committed to delivering cutting-edge capabilities to the warfighter with speed and precision," said ExW Department Head Ashlee Landreth. "By applying lessons learned from MRAP and embracing modularity, rapid prototyping, rigorous testing and warfighter feedback, we are accelerating the development and fielding of next-generation technologies that give the Naval and Joint Force a decisive edge on the battlefield."

Engineers who have worked at the command for decades say teams have refined and baked lessons learned into the systems-integration process, something that intricately includes COTS solutions, to build the systems for the platforms that Marines take to war.

For example, NIWC Atlantic's signature Networking on the Move (NOTM) technology was designed in 2012 in response to an urgent Marine Corps request by U.S. Central Command to expand the capability to vehicles beyond the MRAP. Once the JLTV emerged, the Marine Corps asked ExW Department to develop a transferrable variant for it.

So the team engineered a way for NOTM to be integrated onto three separate JLTVs, operating as one system, providing Marines a sophisticated communications hub to transmit and receive vital information across the battlespace in seconds, allowing infantry troops to fight at high speeds while still maintaining critical command and control functions.

More recently, the ExW Department also integrated long-term power supplies and a completely redesigned, state-of-the-art communications system onto the Ground/Air Task-Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), a 360-degree, 3D surveillance, air-defense and air-control radar system that has replaced five legacy systems for the Marine Corps.

The department also outfitted the JLTV with the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, or NMESIS, which is a cutting-edge, land-based, anti-ship missile capability tailored for the complex littoral environment.

Jenny Bennett, who leads the ExW Department's platform integration team that was responsible for fielding the JLTV, said every integration has to be meticulously managed through workflow processes that ensure the end-user, the warfighter, always gets into the identical JLTV variant—same look, same

feel, same function. “We baseline every truck before turning it over to our MADIS, NOTM or NMESIS teams,” she said.

Modularity & Speed

As a result of MRAP lessons learned, the ExW Department eventually broke with tradition and began procuring technical data packages (TDPs) from industry. Owning the TDPs that are tied to a COTS solution ensured government could find alternative, competitive sources in the marketplace during times of supply chain instability.

Peter Ward, ExW Department deputy, who was a young systems engineer just joining NIWC Atlantic 20 years ago, said the department continued to innovate. It bought and standardized data and focused heavily on incorporating a more vendor-neutral, “modular open systems approach,” or MOSA.

“We have focused on modularity for a long time,” Ward said. “No matter which commercial solution is available, the MOSA framework specifically enables a collaborative environment for working with vendors and filling specific operational needs.”

With TDPs and other sensitive data, Ward said MOSA concepts help ensure proprietary data does not later keep engineers from achieving interoperability.

Recently, MOSA also enabled ExW Department engineers to tailor COTS software to build a secure, hardware-agnostic platform called the Common Hosting Environment (CHE). Using next generation technologies, CHE is the first container-hosting environment that can run apps for Marines in the field.

Perhaps just as important as the unseen innovations in software, agile processes and engineering insights, the physical infrastructures stood up at NIWC Atlantic since the MRAP buildup is paying enormous dividends now 20 years later.

In 2007, NIWC Atlantic first stood up Poseidon Park for radio frequency testing of vehicle-mounted antennas. Instead of shipping vehicles hundreds of miles away on rail, JLTVs, ACVs and other vehicles drive onto an automated vehicle turntable to be tested and validated under an overhead gantry through range checks, antenna cosite analysis and verifications of survivability.

In 2011, the command unveiled the nearby Small Autonomous Unmanned Systems Research (SAUSR) Range to support drone swarming technologies, resilient communications, C4ISR test and evaluation, and other science and technology research.

Last year, the SAUSR Range expanded its footprint and mission set to unveil a new laser range focused on advancing naval communications through the research and development of free-space optics.

In addition to the two outdoor capabilities, NIWC Atlantic began building indoor systems integration labs, or SILs, enabling engineers to test and integrate new commercial solutions within physically constructed replicas of real-world platforms, such as one resembling the inside of a JLTV and another one the Marine Corps' new advanced reconnaissance vehicle.

"The systems integration process becomes a lot more agile and iterative when you are working in these controlled environments," said Jeff Sims, who leads the Expeditionary Platform Integration Division at ExW Department. "SILs enhance continuous improvements and the rapid adaptation of solutions."

SILs have also institutionalized rapid prototyping practices, bringing together diverse vendors, industry partners and subject matter experts to optimize the integration of the

latest innovations, from GPS technologies, radios, ruggedized laptops, sensors and cameras to data-fusing AI, advanced networking, driver-vision systems and electronic warfare.

“The cool thing is how the SIL speeds us up, gives us more flexibility and gets us across the finish line through modeling and simulation,” Ward said. “Instead of requiring that everyone come together all at the same time to integrate, whenever a program discovers a new commercial product offering, we can just go in with all the other equipment, see how it configures, design it, integrate a new system and get it out the door.”

Platforms successfully integrated inside of a SIL are then dispatched for environmental and operational testing at Poseidon Park, SAUSR Range and other labs on base. Before final warfighter acceptance, a field user evaluation is typically coordinated with Marine units.

“All of these developments have helped us field equipment faster, because it’s not only about researching and finding products off the shelf,” Ward said. “When you procure them, you need to integrate them and modify them, so they work together and do no harm to one another, and then test them. Without these labs and ranges on site, where we can physically drive the vehicles to see which ones perform best, it would take forever.”

At NIWC Atlantic, innovations in automation, engineering, modularity, systems integration and software-defined communications have made the command good stewards of their many MRAP lessons-learned. Rather than be cloistered in labs, teams are external-facing, working closely with pioneers in industry, constantly experimenting with the integration of systems, walking lockstep with their Marine sponsors and very appreciative of the multifaceted stakeholder relationships a Navy lab like NIWC Atlantic must continually foster and

support in order to continue delivering worldclass information warfare solutions to the Fleet.

“We know the Marine Corps requires information warfighting capabilities to create and exploit information advantages on all points of the competition continuum,” Landreth said. “This is why NIWC Atlantic—from MRAP to MADIS and beyond—plays such a critical role in the success of the modern-day Marine.”

About NIWC Atlantic

As a part of Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, NIWC Atlantic provides systems engineering and acquisition to deliver information warfare capabilities to the naval, joint and national warfighter through the acquisition, development, integration, production, test, deployment, and sustainment of interoperable command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, cyber and information technology capabilities.

USS Nimitz Conducts Milestone Departure from Naval Base Kitsap

U.S. Sailors man the rails underway aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) during the ship's final departure from Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton, Washington, Mar. 7, 2026. Nimitz is underway in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations as part of a scheduled homeport shift to Norfolk, Virginia. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jaron Wills)

by LT.J.G. Paul Fletcher, March 9, 2026

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) departed Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Washington, for the last time in its 51-year service history, as part of a scheduled homeport shift to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, March 7.

Nimitz has spent the majority of its five decades of service as the "Pacific Northwest's Carrier," deploying around the world to affirm the U.S. Navy's commitment to forward presence, ensuring maritime security, deterring aggression, and protecting the American way of life.

"This ship and her crew could not be more thankful to the

people of Washington State for their decades of hospitality, friendship and trust," said Capt. Joseph Furco, commanding officer of Nimitz. "It is in no small part due to the support of our local community that Nimitz Sailors have been able to successfully train, fight and win, exemplifying the ship's motto; Teamwork, a Tradition."

Mostly recently, Nimitz returned to Bremerton in December after nine months underway in the U.S. 3rd, 5th, and 7th Fleets. As flagship of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (NIMCSG) during this period, the Nimitz and her crew completed more than 8,500 sorties and 17,000 flight hours, carried out 50 replenishments-at-sea aboard the carrier and sailed over 82,000 nautical miles combined.

Additionally, the NIMCSG supported U.S. Africa Command operations by conducting strikes against ISIS targets in Somalia.

The lead ship of her class, Nimitz was commissioned May 3, 1975, and named in honor of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz who achieved the highest rank in the United States Navy as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet during World War II.

An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic and relevant training to ensure the readiness necessary to execute the U.S. Navy's timeless role across the full spectrum of military operations. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance a shared vision of a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific in which all nations are secure in their sovereignty and free from coercion.

FN Awarded $9.9 Million Contract from U.S. Army and Navy for Machine Guns

MCLEAN, Va., March 5, 2026 – FN America, LLC, is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a $9.9 million contract to supply the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy with FN® M240B machine guns, continuing the supply of FN America's longest-standing military weapons platform.

"This contract continues FN's legacy of providing the most effective and advanced weapon systems for the warfighter," said Jim Williams, Vice President, Military Programs for FN America, LLC. "The U.S. Army contract for the M240 machine gun was the first military contract FN was awarded and the first to be produced from our production facility in South Carolina. We're incredibly honored to continue supporting the U.S. military with high-quality and reliable weapon systems

for our servicemen and women.”

The FN® M240B, built on the M240 platform that was adopted and has been in use by the U.S. military since the late 1970s, is the “go-to/can-do” medium machine gun for all branches of the U.S. military. It offers unmatched reliability, extended range and an exceptional service life. This weapon’s high volume of fire makes it the principal suppressive firearm for the infantry platoon and company.

Chambered in 7.62x51mm NATO, the M240B’s cold hammer-forged MIL-SPEC barrel has a hard-chromed bore for longer life, improved accuracy and maximum range of 3,725 meters. The receiver is machined steel and is equipped with a top-mounted MIL-STD-1913 optical rail. The crossbolt safety and curved trigger help enhance operator control.

“Since beginning our first production in 1981, FN has produced millions of firearms for the U.S. military at our Columbia, SC, manufacturing facility,” said Daryl Atkins, Director, Industrialized Weapons for FN America, LLC. “FN is extremely proud of the high-quality, reliable firearms we build for our military servicemen and women, and we look forward to continuing the tradition with this contract.”

Throughout its history, FN has been one of the largest suppliers of small arms to the U.S. military and continues to develop innovative, future technology. In addition to the M240 platform, the company currently holds contracts for the FN® M249, MK 46, MK 48, MK 17 and MK 20 SSR for USSOCOM and various other contracts.

General Dynamics NASSCO Christens the Sixth and Final Ship in the ESB Program for the U.S. Navy

From General Dynamics NASSCO, March 7, 2026

SAN DIEGO – Today, General Dynamics NASSCO christened the USNS *Hector A. Cafferata Jr.* (ESB 8), the sixth and final ship for the U.S. Navy's Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) program. Sergeant Major Carlos A. Ruiz served as the principal speaker at the ceremony, which also included remarks from NASSCO, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Marine Corps representatives. Following remarks, ship co-sponsors Heather Cafferata, daughter of the ship's namesake, and Jessica Cafferata, granddaughter of the ship's namesake, christened the ship with the traditional champagne bottle break alongside the hull.

“Ships are not just steel and machinery—they carry legacies, and they connect past generations to future ones,” said David Carver, president of General Dynamics NASSCO. “The remarkable story of valor and sacrifice of Hector Cafferata Jr. will soon sail across the globe, carried by a ship that embodies his courage and dedication.”

The ship is named for Private First Class Hector A. Cafferata Jr., who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his brave actions at the Battle of Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. He single-handedly held off a regimental-strength enemy force and safeguarded wounded Marines by throwing a live grenade away from his position. The Medal of Honor was presented to him by President Harry Truman in a White House ceremony in 1952.

The ESB ship class is a highly flexible platform designed to support multiple maritime-based missions. ESB ships are mobile sea-based assets and are a part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces, equipment, supplies, and warfighting capability. These 784-foot ships are configured with a 52,000 square-foot flight deck to support MH-53, MH-60, MV-22 tilt-rotor, and H1 aircraft operations.

The first five ships in the ESB program – USS *Lewis B. Puller* (ESB 3), USS *Hershel “Woody” Williams* (ESB 4), USS *Miguel Keith* (ESB 5), USS *John L. Canley* (ESB 6), and USNS *Robert E. Simanek* (ESB 7) – have been delivered to the U.S. Navy.

USS Cincinnati Returns to

Homeport in San Diego

Families and friends welcome the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Cincinnati (LCS 20) as it returns to its homeport of Naval Base San Diego, March 4, 2026. The Cincinnati returned to its homeport of San Diego after eight months of sustained operations in the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Class Josh Coté)

By Lt. Brinn Hefron, Commander, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1, March 4, 2026

SAN DIEGO – Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Cincinnati (LCS 20) arrived at its San Diego homeport following eight months of sustained operations at sea, March 4.

Cincinnati conducted several multilateral exercises and port visits in the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations throughout the Indo-Pacific, including Brunei, Cambodia,

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Singapore, enhancing regional maritime cooperation and interoperability. Cincinnati participated in Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercises with members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) throughout the Pacific.

“I am immensely proud of the crew for their exceptional performance during our sustained operations abroad,” said Cmdr. Andrew Recame, commanding officer of Cincinnati. “This was a significant milestone, not only for the ship and its crew, but for the entire LCS program. For eight months, Team Cincy operated boldly in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, demonstrating the versatility and capability of the U.S. Navy wherever we went. The dedication and professionalism of our Sailors has been truly outstanding, and they have represented the best of America’s spirit on the high seas and foreign shores.”

In July 2025, during a port visit to the Republic of Marshall Islands, Cincinnati hosted “Stand and Defend,” a special event to honor Marshallese U.S. military veterans for their service, sacrifice, and dedication; co-hosted an Independence Day Celebration at Delap Dock; and conducted ship tours for dignitaries including the ambassador to the Marshall Islands.

In September 2025, Cincinnati transited to the Southern Hemisphere enroute to Timor-Leste. Upon crossing the equator, the crew took part in a “Crossing the Line” ceremony, a time-honored maritime tradition where “Pollywogs,” those who have never crossed the equator, are transformed into “Shellbacks.” Upon arrival in Dili, Timor-Leste, Cincinnati participated in CARAT Timor-Leste 2025, a comprehensive bilateral exercise designed to enhance maritime partnership and interoperability. The exercise encompassed a series of key diplomatic and military-to-military engagements, from the official opening and closing ceremonies to a formal U.S. Navy reception that strengthened strategic maritime ties.

In October 2025, Cincinnati participated in multinational exercise Sama Sama 2025 alongside ships and aircraft from Canada, France, Japan, and the Philippines. “Sama Sama,” a Tagalog word that translates to “together,” consisted of a series of maritime exercises while circumnavigating the Philippine province of Palawan. Cincinnati’s crew, as part of a combined, international force, planned and conducted six days of underway communications exercises, live-fire exercises, tactical maneuvering drills, flight operations, and small boat operations.

Cincinnati participated in CARAT Brunei 2025, reinforcing commitment to regional security and maritime partnerships. The exercise included subject matter expert exchanges in a variety of fields including legal, communications, cyber security, damage control, and medical. Cincinnati Sailors also participated in community relations events where they volunteered at Yayasan Kanser Kanak, a children’s cancer foundation; the Sejahtera Community Animal Shelter; and the Brunei Darussalam Paraplegic and Physically Disabled Association: Wheelchair Repair Facility/Disabled Training Center. CARAT Brunei concluded with the sea phase, where Cincinnati and a Royal Brunei Armed Forces offshore patrol vessel, a P-8A Poseidon from Commander, Task Force 72, and a U.S. Coast Guard visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) team conducted live-fire gunnery exercises, air defense exercises, and VBSS operations.

In December 2025, Cincinnati participated in CARAT Malaysia 2025, marking another significant milestone in the long-standing defense partnership. During three days at sea, Cincinnati, alongside Royal Malaysian Navy Lekiu-class guided-missile frigate KD Lekiu (FFG 30), sailed in formation and conducted exercises such as communications drills, simulated air defense exercises, and deck landing qualifications within the Strait of Malacca.

Cincinnati also co-hosted ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise (AUMX)

2025 with the Indonesian Navy in Batam, Indonesia. The exercise brought together eight partner navies, including warships from Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam, and culminated with two days of communication exercises, tactical maneuvering drills, air defense exercises, search and rescue, and medical evacuation drills.

In January, Cincinnati was the first U.S. Navy warship to moor pierside at Ream Naval Base, Cambodia. This was only the second visit of a U.S. warship to the Kingdom of Cambodia in the last nine years, following Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Savannah's (LCS 28) visit in 2024. While in port, the crew welcomed Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Adm. Samuel Paparo, along with over 100 senior military and government officials for a hosted reception and ship tours.

"It is a privilege to welcome home and recognize the safe return of the USS Cincinnati after a long and challenging deployment," said Capt. James Hoey, commodore, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. "This warship demonstrated a strong and steady presence in strategically vital waterways and operated seamlessly alongside our allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific region. Over the course of this deployment, this crew found common purpose in one another and in the mission: standing the watch, trusting each other, and serving something greater than themselves. I know the families, friends and shipmates here today are just as proud of their Sailors as I am.

Cincinnati's operations exemplify the Navy's commitment to integrated deterrence, regional maritime security, and enduring alliances and partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Littoral combat ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century threats.

LCS integrate with joint, combined, manned and unmanned teams to support forward-presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

For more news from Commander, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1, visit https://www.surfpac.navy.mil/comlcsron1/ or follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/COMLCSRONONE/ or on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/littoralcombatshipsquadron1/.

While Improving Quality of Life, Navy Remains Ready to Fight

Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, vice chief of naval operations, testifies at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on

joint force readiness in Washington, March 4, 2026. **Credit:**DOW screenshot

March 5, 2026 | By David Vergun, DoW News

The Navy is participating in exercises and operations worldwide, said Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, vice chief of naval operations, who, along with other service leaders, testified yesterday at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington on joint force readiness.

Last year in the Middle East, the Navy executed strikes against adversaries during Operations Rough Rider and Midnight Hammer, while defending regional allies and partners.

This year, the Navy participated in Operation Absolute Resolve in the Atlantic, while sailors operate every day to deter China and build partnerships in the Pacific, Kilby said.

Currently, the Navy is supporting Operation Epic Fury. On March 3, a Navy fast attack submarine sank an Iranian combatant ship with the Mark 48 torpedo.

The Navy's primary weapon system is its sailors, the admiral said, noting that the service exceeded its recruiting goals last year and is successfully working to increase retention.

To further support sailors, the Navy is focused on improving quality of life through a new initiative that provides permanent shore-based housing so that no sailor is required to live aboard a ship while on shore duty, he said. Efforts also include expanding child care, improving fitness facilities and expanding meal selections with healthy options.

Always looking for ways to improve, the service is increasing platform readiness by reducing maintenance delays, investing in shipyard infrastructure optimization and developing the civilian workforce. Advanced technologies such as conditions-based maintenance and advanced additive manufacturing are

being used to optimize systems.

“The Navy continues to drive toward our goal of 80% combat surge-ready ships, aircraft and submarines with urgency and accountability,” Kilby said, adding that he’s concerned with the material condition of amphibious ships and is working to improve that.

Hegseth Says There’s No Shortage of American Will, Resources in Operation Epic Fury

March 5, 2026 | By Matthew Olay, DoW News

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth today said there is no shortage of American will, nor is there a shortage of materiel, when it comes to U.S. kinetic engagement against the Iranian terrorist regime during Operation Epic Fury.

While providing an update on the conflict for the second time in as many days, and joined by the commander of U.S. Central Command, Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, Hegseth said the Iranian regime would be foolish to think that the U.S. isn’t completely committed to accomplishing the mission in Iran.

“Iran is hoping that we cannot sustain this, which is a really bad miscalculation for the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] in Iran,” Hegseth said during a press briefing at Centcom headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

He added that there is no shortage of American will to execute

the mission, and that there is no shortage of U.S. munitions to facilitate that execution.

“Our stockpiles of defensive and offensive weapons allow us to sustain this campaign as long as we need to. … Again, our munition status only increases as our advantage increases. [And] our capabilities? We have only just begun to fight and fight decisively,” Hegseth said.

Contrary to the notion that there is a shortage of U.S. material, the secretary said that even more offensive firepower is headed to the region.

“The amount of combat power that’s still flowing – that’s still coming – that we’ll be able to project over Iran is in multiples of what it currently is right now, when you add up our capabilities and those of the Israeli defense forces,” Hegseth said.

“Our munitions are full up, and our will is ironclad, which means our timeline is ours and ours alone to control as long as it takes, to ensure the United States of America achieves these objectives,” he added.

Cooper thanked Hegseth for authorizing Centcom to use overwhelming kinetic force against the Iranian regime.

“If I could channel my inner Navy officer, we are at ‘full speed ahead’ in executing orders given by leadership in Washington,” Cooper told the media.

The admiral concurred with Hegseth’s assessment that U.S. combat power is growing in the region while Iran’s continually declines, citing the last 72 hours as an example.

During that time, America’s bomber force has struck close to 200 targets deep inside Iran, including around the capital city of Tehran.

Cooper also said that, in just the one hour prior to the start

of today’s press conference, U.S. B-2 Spirit stealth bombers dropped dozens of 2,000-pound penetrator bombs that targeted deeply buried Iranian ballistic missile launchers.

“Notably, we have also struck Iran’s equivalent of [U.S.] Space Command, which degrades [Iran’s] ability to threaten Americans,” he said.

As to the decline in Iran’s combat capability, Cooper said that Iran’s ballistic missile attacks have decreased by 90% since the first day of the conflict, and that Iranian drone attacks have decreased by 83% in the same timeframe.

At sea, Cooper said the count of sunken Iranian navy ships has surpassed 30.

“And in just the last few hours, we hit an Iranian drone carrier ship, roughly the size of a World War II aircraft carrier. And as we speak, it’s on fire,” he added.

Under orders from President Donald J. Trump, Centcom forces are working to destroy Iran’s missile industrial base.

“We’re not just hitting what they have, we’re destroying their ability to rebuild. And so, as we transition to the next phase of this operation, we will systemically dismantle Iran’s missile production capability for the future, and that’s absolutely in progress,” Cooper said.

He added that Centcom and Israel’s combined joint forces have “relentlessly destroyed” Iran’s air defenses during the conflict, and that those forces will continue hunting for more systems to attack.

“Our air defenders are at the top of their game, [and] I couldn’t be prouder, shoulder to shoulder with our partners in the region – in many cases – providing the most integrated air defense network in Middle East history,” Cooper said.

Following their formal remarks, Hegseth addressed reports that

a U.S. F-15 Eagle fighter jet had been shot down, calling the reports false.

“As you can imagine, Iran is doing everything it can to peddle in lies, deception and inflation of numbers, in reality, mostly to propagandize to their own people,” he said, adding that Iran had floated another false report that 500 Americans have been killed in the conflict.

The secretary also addressed concerns about the operation expanding beyond Iran’s borders to other nations throughout the Middle East, saying that nothing could be further from the truth, and that Iran’s targeting of countries throughout the region is actually encouraging those countries to side with the U.S. and Israel in the conflict.

“It’s actually firming up the unity of resistance in order to focus exactly where we need to,” Hegseth said. “So, this idea that [the conflict] is expanding – no, it’s actually simplifying, in a number of ways – exactly what we need to achieve and how we’ll achieve it.”

Keel Laid for Future USS Philadelphia

Mrs. Maureen Paparo, sponsor for LPD 32, Philadelphia, and other platform guests watch as Cory Dillon, Ingalls Structural Welder, welds the sponsor's initials onto the keel plate at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS, March 3, 2026. (Photo/Luis Solis) In Photo From Left: Brian Blanchette, President of Ingalls Shipbuilding and Executive Vice President at HII Chris Kastner, President and CEO, HII, Captain Randy Slaff, Commanding Officer, Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, Gulf Coast, Cory Dillon, Ingalls Structural Welder, Captain Matt Tardy, Unites States Navy, Amphibious Warfare Program Manager, Program Executive Office, Ships, Admiral Samuel Paparo, Unites States Navy, Commander, United States Indo Pacific Command, and husband to our ship sponsor, and Mrs. Maureen Paparo, Sponsor and Keel Authenticator of LPD 32. (Photo by Luis Solis)
From Team Ships Public Affairs, March 4, 2026

PASCAGOULA, Miss. - The keel for the future USS Philadelphia (LPD 32), a San Antonio class-amphibious transport dock ship, was authenticated at HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division, March 3.

The ship is named in honor of the historic city of Philadelphia and its maritime legacy. The city is the birthplace of the U.S Navy and Marine Corps and was home to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard from 1801-1995, which constructed numerous Navy vessels.

Keel laying authentication ceremonies are a centuries-old tradition marking a significant construction milestone where a ship transitions from design to reality. The keel was authenticated when the initials of the ship's sponsor, Ms. Maureen Paparo, were welded onto a steel plate. Paparo is a Philadelphia native and the spouse of Adm. Samuel Paparo, the 27th Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. This plate will be permanently affixed to the ship's hull, remaining with the vessel throughout its entire service life as a symbol of its beginning.

"The future USS Philadelphia honors one of America's foundational cities and its continuous support of the Navy and the maritime domain," said Capt. Matthew Tardy, program manager, Amphibious Warfare Program Office. "This keel laying marks the ceremonial beginning of construction and we look forward to delivering this ship to the fleet."

San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships (LPD) are warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. They provide the Navy and Marine Corps with modern, sea-based platforms that are networked, survivable, and built to operate with 21st-century transformational platforms such as air-cushioned landing craft (LCAC), modern helicopters, and vertical take-off landing craft (MV-22).

Today's ceremony underscores the Navy's commitment to building America's Golden Fleet. For 250 years, American naval power has projected strength globally. That mission continues – and intensifies. We operate forward 24/7, 365 days a year. This

operational tempo demands continuous capability delivery, and the Golden Fleet is our answer.

As a Department of War acquisition organization, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, and auxiliary ships, including special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

General Dynamics Mission Systems awarded contract to continue support to Trident II Strategic Weapon System

Delivering full life cycle support and next-generation fire control systems for strategic deterrence

From General Dynamics Mission Systems, March 4, 2026

CHANTILLY, Va. – General Dynamics Mission Systems announced today that it was awarded a costplus- incentive-fee and cost-plus-fixed-fee follow-on contract with an initial order value of $255 million as the prime integrator for the Trident II Fire Control System (FCS). Under the fiscal year 2026 FCS omnibus contract, General Dynamics will continue to provide full life cycle and operational support for all deployed Ohio-

class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) FCSs, as well as continue the development, production and installation for all new Columbia-class SSBN FCSs through 2032. The contract, awarded in January, includes options which, if exercised, would bring the cumulative value to $740 million.

General Dynamics Mission Systems supports the Navy's shipbuilding priority with FCS development, production, sparing and installation activities for three Columbia-class hulls along with additional labs and trainers kits. Continuous development for the Trident II D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) FCS will occur under this contract, as well.

"General Dynamics Mission Systems has been a trusted provider of highly reliable fire control systems to the U.S. submarine force for more than seven decades. We remain committed to delivering highly reliable state-of-the-art, innovative solutions to the U.S. Navy. Supporting the strategic deterrent mission is a responsibility we take seriously, and we are dedicated to continuing our track record of on-time, on-budget delivery," said Laura Hooks, vice president and general manager of Maritime and Strategic Systems at General Dynamics Mission Systems.

Work will be performed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts (87%); Bangor, Washington (1%); Kings Bay, Georgia (1%); Loanhead, Midlothian, United Kingdom (4%); Cape Canaveral, Florida (3%); Groton, Connecticut (3%); and Quonset Point, Rhode Island (2%). If all options are exercised, work will continue until December 2032.

Hegseth: Iranian Warship Sunk by U.S. Submarine Torpedo

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – An Iranian warship has been sunk by a torpedo fired from a U.S. Navy submarine, the Secretary of War said. The action would be the first ship sunk by torpedo fired from a U.S. Navy ship since World War II.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said on March 4, 2026, that the Iranian ship was sunk in the Indian Ocean

According to the BBC, the sunken ship was the IRIS Dena, a guided-missile frigate that went down off the southern coast of Sri Lanka. The ship was one of six ships of the Moudge class.

According to Reuters, the Sri Lankan Navy rescued 32 people from the ship, of a crew estimated to number 180 members. At

least 80 crew members died in the action.

The action represents the first sinking of an enemy warship by a U.S. submarine’s torpedo since World War II.

During the Falklands War, on May 2, 1982, the Royal Navy nuclear-powered attack submarine HMS Conqueror sank the Argentine Navy cruiser ARA Belgrano with a torpedo. The Belgrano was formerly the light cruiser USS Phoenix.

U.S. Navy submarines are armed with 21-inch Mark 48 21-inch diameter torpedoes.