

# U.S. 4th Fleet Announces Southern Seas 2024 Deployment



ATLANTIC OCEAN (Feb. 26, 2024) The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) conducts a replenishment-at-sea with the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) while underway in the Atlantic Ocean, Feb. 26, 2024. (USN photo by MC2 Nicholas A. Russell)  
From U.S. 4th Fleet, 5 April 2024

MAYPORT, Fla. - The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) will deploy to the U.S. Southern Command area of operations over the next few months as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Southern Seas 2024 deployment.

George Washington, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, USS Porter (DDG 78), and Henry J. Kaiser-class replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall (T-AO-189) are scheduled to conduct passing exercises and operations at sea

with partner nation maritime forces as the ships circumnavigate the continent of South America. Southern Seas 2024 will feature subject matter expert exchanges and provide the opportunity for distinguished visitors from partner nations to see aircraft carrier operations up close. Engagements are planned with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, with port visits planned for Brazil, Chile, and Peru.

“Southern Seas 2024 will provide the opportunity to improve interoperability and increase proficiency with partner nation maritime forces,” said Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “Deployments like Southern Seas strengthen maritime partnerships and build trust with our partners in the region.”

“We look forward to building readiness and advancing training as we engage with our friends and partners in South America,” said Rear Adm. Robert Westendorff, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 10. “We also look forward to visiting several spectacular locations in South America, as U.S. Navy Sailors don’t often get to see this part of the world.”

New for Southern Seas 2024, an embarked international staff of approximately two dozen officers from 11 partner nations will serve aboard USS George Washington. This international staff will receive instruction from U.S. Naval War College professors and will work alongside embarked Destroyer Squadron 40 personnel to conduct detailed operational planning in support of operations at sea. Countries planning to participate in this embarked international staff include Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Southern Seas 2024 marks the 10th mission to the region since 2007 and the third time involving USS George Washington. The aircraft carrier also conducted Southern Seas 2008 and

Southern Seas 2015. Like the previous deployments, Southern Seas 2024 will foster goodwill, strengthen maritime partnerships, counter threats, and build our team.

Aircraft carrier USS George Washington is one of the centerpieces of America's Naval forces – the most adaptable and survivable airfields in the world. On any given day, Sailors aboard an aircraft carrier and its air wing come to the fight trained and equipped across a full range of missions. They are ready to control the sea, conduct strikes, and maneuver across the electromagnetic spectrum and cyberspace. No other naval force fields a commensurate range and depth of combat capabilities.

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## **April 4 Red Sea Update**

U.S. Central Command, April 4, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 2:20 p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 4, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one anti-ship missile (ASM) in a Houthi controlled territory of Yemen. There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

It was determined that the missile presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region. CENTCOM is dedicated to protecting the freedom of navigation and making international waters safer and more secure for Coalition and merchant vessels.

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# Metal Shark Set to Debut Autonomous, Amphibious, Semi-Submersible “Prowler” Military Interceptor and “Frenzy” Micro-USV



JEANERETTE, La. – *April 4th, 2024*: Louisiana-based boat builder Metal Shark has announced the debut of “Prowler,” a versatile military craft combining multiple unique technologies to meet the current and near future warfighting requirements of the US military and its allies. The company is also debuting “Frenzy,” a high-performance, low-cost, amphibious micro-USV with a payload carrying capacity of up to 14 lbs.

Merging autonomous, amphibious, and semi-submersible capabilities with the performance and seakeeping characteristics of a slender deep-vee monohull surface craft, Prowler has been designed to address operational challenges

identified by the United States Navy and Marine Corps, two key Metal Shark clients.

“Prowler represents the sum total of everything we’ve learned while building 400-plus autonomous and remote operated vessels for our military customers over the past decade,” said Metal Shark CEO Chris Allard. “Every aspect of Prowler’s intended operation draws from proven technology. Prowler delivers massive increases in lethality and versatility, merging multiple capabilities into a compact, flexible, lower-cost platform ready for volume production.”

Fully amphibious and capable of autonomous or remote operation on land or at sea, Prowler offers drastically simplified launch and recovery compared to traditional vessels. Prowler is capable of self-launch and self-recovery at boat ramps, without a prime mover or trailer, or from the well deck of an amphibious ship, with no need for cumbersome cradles or dollies. Prowler’s low-speed crawl enables autonomous or remote operation on land, allowing vessels to be staged and maneuvered with minimal effort.

Prowler operates on land via a proprietary electric-drive system developed by Metal Shark, which uses low-pressure, high-traction tires mated to dedicated motors for propulsion and steering. Hydraulic rams raise and lower front and rear wheels for operation on land or at sea. Rear wheels are equipped with OTR-certified tires and marine brakes, and Prowler features DOT-compliant lighting. This allows Prowler to be transported over the road behind a conventional prime mover with no trailer, greatly simplifying logistics for operators.

Propelled by a 300-horsepower Volvo Penta D6 Aquamatic inboard diesel engine and stern drive, the 30-foot, welded-aluminum Prowler operates as a typical surface vessel while underway, with a deep-vee planing hull delivering a 35-knot sprint speed and 500 nautical mile range.



Designed for extended loitering in a semi-submerged state, Prowler's large integrated ballast tanks flood when the vessel is static. In loitering mode, Prowler's decks are near the waterline, with only the vessel's arch-style communications mast visible above the water. Semi-submersion reduces Prowler's operational profile while also improving stability for sensors, surveillance and weapons systems.

Prowler's mast carries an array of communications equipment and a situational awareness ensemble for autonomous or remote operation, and can be equipped with port and starboard launch tubes for the deployment of loitering smart drones or other weapons. The mast also serves as the air intake for Prowler's diesel engine. A lithium-ion battery or optional generator power pack supports station keeping, surveillance, guidance, and communications systems during extended loitering periods of up to a week.

The lift from Prowler's planing hull design allows the vessel to quickly climb to the surface from its submerged state to resume normal operation once the surveillance mission concludes.

Prowler is equipped with a computer networked system able to support a multitude of UMAA-compliant command and control, autonomy, targeting, and AI software packages. Prowler's system architecture provides the forward flexibility to accommodate third party software and/or hardware upgrades to support collaborative intercept capability or other technologies as they may be required.

Prowler's computer system, along with propulsion, mechanical, and electrical systems are contained within a single removable module to allow for expedited onsite servicing, repair, upgrade, or replacement with no need to transport the vessel.

Prowler can simultaneously carry multiple payloads, with 1,000 lbs. of total payload carrying capacity. In addition to the

aforementioned smart loitering drones, Prowler can carry up to twelve “Frenzy” amphibious micro USVs, which are carried on deck and self-launched on their own wheels via Prowler’s stern ramp. Designed and built by Metal Shark, the Frenzy features electric waterjet propulsion, carries a payload of up to 14 lbs., and, like Prowler, can loiter in a semi-submerged state.

“I’ve been toying with the notion of this little gizmo ever since we began designing the Long Range Unmanned Surface Vessel (LRUSV) for the Marine Corps,” said Mr. Allard, speaking of the Frenzy micro USV. “There’s a huge need for attritable USVs in a compact form factor, and very few sources. Frenzy will serve this demand, and putting Frenzy onboard Prowler makes perfect sense. Pairing an over-the-horizon capable USV with micro-USVs delivers a one-two punch capability, keeping the key asset safe while allowing the attritable drones to do their job, all while being watched from the sky.”

Prowler and Frenzy will make their public debut April 8th through 10th at Sea-Air-Space 2024 in National Harbor, Maryland, before returning to Metal Shark’s Louisiana facilities for further testing and development.

“We challenged the men and women of Metal Shark to dream big and to think outside the box to bring Prowler and Frenzy to life in an accelerated timeframe, and I am blown away by their talent, energy, and dedication to this project,” said Mr. Allard. “I look forward to showing off the ingenuity and hard work of our people next week at Sea-Air-Space.”

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# April 3 Red Sea Update

U.S. Central Command, April 3, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between approximately 3:49 to 10:00 a.m. (Sanaa time) on April 3, USS Gravely (DDG 107) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one inbound anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) and two unmanned aerial systems (UAS) launched by Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists from Yemen towards USS Gravely in the Red Sea.

There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

Additionally, during this timeframe CENTCOM forces destroyed a mobile surface-to-air missile system in Houthi controlled territory.

It was determined these systems presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region.

U.S. Central Command is dedicated to protecting the freedom of navigation and making international waters safer and more secure for Coalition and merchant vessels.

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## **ARTEMIS program receives first repatriated Swiss F-5 of Batch for U.S. Navy**





The first of 22 repatriated Swiss F-5 Tiger II aircraft arrived at the Tactical Air Support facility at Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida, March 21 for the second phase of the Avionics Reconfiguration and Tactical/Modernization for Inventory Standardization (ARTEMIS) program, ferried by a U.S. Marine Corps C-130J from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 234.

Naval Air Systems Command, Apr. 4, 2024

CECIL FIELD, Florida – The first of 22 repatriated Swiss F-5 Tiger II aircraft arrived at the Tactical Air Support facility at Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida, March 21 for the second phase of the Avionics Reconfiguration and Tactical/Modernization for Inventory Standardization (ARTEMIS) program.

The aircraft, which arrived via a U.S. Marine Corps C-130J from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 234, marks a milestone that is the culmination of several months of engineering and maintenance efforts performed by the Tactical Air Support team in close coordination with Navy and Marine Corps stakeholders, said Capt. Greg Sutton, Specialized and Proven Aircraft Program Office (PMA-226) program manager.

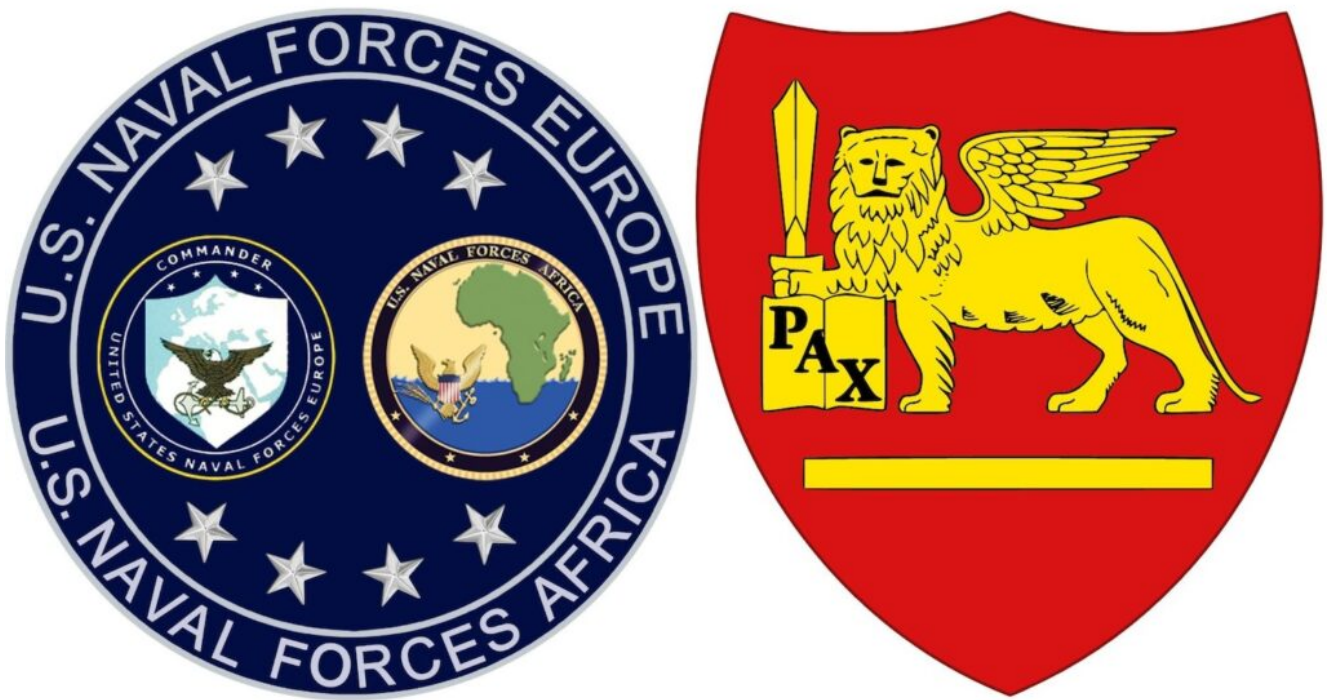
“Expansion of the F-5 program ensures future success in training Navy and Marine Corps aviators,” Sutton said.

In 2020, the US Navy and the Swiss Government entered into an agreement to repatriate 22 Swiss Air Force F-5 aircraft into the US Navy and US Marine Corps Adversary fleet. As part of the ARTEMIS Program, the Tactical Air Support subcontractor, RUAG, located in Emmen, Switzerland, performs the program’s first phase with aircraft inspection, maintenance, structural component replacement, and engine modification and overhaul. Upon completion of this phase, the aircraft are transferred to Tactical Air Support’s facility to begin phase 2. During this phase, aircraft inspections, maintenance, and repair continue while integrating a new glass cockpit, modern avionics, and other safety modifications.

Initial deliveries of the 22 aircraft are planned by mid-2025 with program completion in 2028 adding 11 F-5 Adversary aircraft to the each to the existing inventory of Navy and Marine Corps.

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## **Black Sea Maritime Forum kicks off in Bucharest**



By U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public Affairs

BUCHAREST, Romania – The third convening of the Black Sea Maritime Forum, cohosted by Romanian Naval Forces, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Allied Joint Force Command Naples, Italy, began April 4 in Bucharest, Romania.

“Maritime security within the Black Sea is a shared interest among NATO allies and partner nations,” said Adm. Stuart B. Munsch, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Allied Joint Force Naples, Italy. “The free flow of commerce on this important waterway is vital to Black Sea countries and supports global economic prosperity. The U.S. Navy, alongside our NATO Allies and partners, is committed to promoting a secure, prosperous, and interconnected Black Sea region that is free from threats to territorial integrity and from economic coercion – this conference speaks to our commitment.”

This year’s forum will be attended by representatives from

Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Romania, Sweden, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States, as well as delegates from NATO navies and partner nations.

“A multi-institutional event, the Black Sea Maritime Forum represents an excellent opportunity to build bridges between the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the Baltic Sea.” said Vice Admiral Mihai Panait, commander of the Romanian Naval Forces. “We have to continue working together and share our experience in order to improve our knowledge regarding the strategic context, risks and threats specific to the Black Sea region and draw some conclusions concerning to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience.”

To facilitate dialogue, panels addressed the Black Sea’s role in the global economy and energy sectors, and Black Sea maritime security cooperation.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the NATO Alliance, the world’s most successful alliance, recently expanding to 32 Nations through the accession of Sweden.

Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Naples was activated on 15 March 2004, when its predecessor command, Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH), was deactivated after nearly 53 years of successful activity in support of peace and stability in and around its designated area of responsibility. Twenty-two NATO nations contribute to the JFC Naples military staff in order to deter aggression and to contribute to the effective defense of NATO territory and forces and to preserve or restore the security of NATO nations.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa is actively involved in maintaining security throughout the region. NAVEUR-NAVAF and U.S. 6th Fleet routinely conduct exercises with Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye, Ukraine, and other Black Sea partner nations, training maritime readiness and increasing interoperability capabilities. Commander, Task Force 68

routinely works with Allied and partner nations to construct logistics infrastructure, while training and exercising demining techniques throughout the region. Commander, Task Force 67's deploys maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, the P-8 Poseidon, to conduct patrols over the Black Sea and surrounding region.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-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 (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

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## **Navy Awards Boeing Additional Funds for MQ-25 Drones for Testing**





The Boeing-owned MQ-25 test unmanned aerial vehicle, T1.  
(Boeing)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded Boeing funds to enhance the production of MQ-25A Stingray carrier-based aerial refueling unmanned aerial vehicles, bringing to five the number procured for testing.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded The Boeing Company a cost-plus-fixed-fee, cost-plus-incentive-fee, fixed-price incentive (firm-target) \$657.1 million contract modification for the aircraft, according to a March 29 Defense Department contract announcement.

“This modification adds scope for the production and delivery of two additional MQ-25 System Demonstration Test Article aircraft (air vehicles four and five), to include associated tooling and communication system changes for the Navy,” the announcement said. “Additionally, this modification definitizes obsolescence phase two for non-recurring engineering to address product baseline obsolescence to support low-rate initial production for the MQ-25 Stingray program.”

The MQ-25A is a single-engine carrier-based UAV designed to refuel other aircraft while in flight. The Navy is procuring the Stingray to refuel F-35 Lightning II and F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters, EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft, and E-2D Advanced Hawkeye command and control aircraft.

Procurement of the MQ-25A will allow the Navy to free up Super Hornet strike fighters from the aerial refueling role for their primary combat missions. It also will help preserve the service life of the Super Hornet fleet.

The Navy ordered four development models of the MQ-25A in August 2018, followed by an order for three more in April 2020. The company-owned prototype made its first flight in September 2019 and in 2021 demonstrated its ability to refuel the F-35C, F/A-18E/F, and the E-2D. The September 2022, the Navy awarded Boeing a contract for advance materials for Low-Rate Initial Production Lot 1. Initial operational capability is expected in 2026. The Navy plans to procure 72 Stingrays.

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## **Lockheed Martin Conducts Historic LRASM Flight Test**





Orlando, Fla., April 3, 2024 – The U.S. Navy in partnership with Lockheed Martin [NYSE: LMT] successfully conducted a historic Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) flight test with four missiles simultaneously in flight.

During the 12<sup>th</sup> Integrated Test Event (ITE-12), the U.S. Navy was able to demonstrate the weapon's inherent high-end lethality from mission planning through kill chain integration and its effects on the target. All mission objectives were met, reinforcing high confidence in the weapon's capabilities and superior firepower.

"We have continued to invest in the design and development of LRASM's anti-surface warfare capabilities to ensure that warfighters have the 21st century security solutions they need to complete their missions and come home safely," said Lisbeth Vogelpohl, LRASM program director at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. "This event was a testament to our commitment to deliver reliable products that work each and every time, ensuring those who serve stay ahead of ready."

ITE-12 was the next 'big-step' in LRASM's evolution. The successful test was a graduation exercise for the missiles'

latest configuration and lays the foundation for increased capabilities to come.

As a member of the AGM-158 family of cruise missiles, LRASM delivers long-range, highly survivable and lethal capability against highly defended surface combatants that no other weapon in the inventory can provide.

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## **Navy and Air Force fighters to train as a joint force in NAWCAD's Joint Simulation Environment**



A pilot tests a U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor cockpit simulator

headed for installation in the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Joint Simulation Environment. The Navy installed a division of four Raptor cockpits alongside a division of eight F-35 Lightning cockpits in its advanced tactical trainer so Navy and Air Force fighter pilots can train as a joint force starting in 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Terri Thomas)

[Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Apr. 2, 2024](#)

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Navy and Air Force fighter pilots will begin training as a joint force at the [Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division](#) (NAWCAD)'s [Joint Simulation Environment](#) (JSE) starting in 2024.

NAWCAD installed a division of four U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor cockpits into the Navy's premier simulation test and training facility alongside its division of eight F-35 Lightning cockpits in January.

"When America is engaged in conflict, the DOD will bring joint capability to bear from every service across all domains," said NAWCAD Commander Rear Adm. John Dougherty IV. "We've replicated this ability in the Joint Simulation Environment, a force multiplier helping aviators deter aggression and—if necessary—prevail in conflict."

The new addition of fifth-generation fighter simulators brings Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and allied partners into the hyper-realistic digital range that consists of cockpits, domed simulators with 4K projectors, and aircraft software to enable pilots to fly wartime scenarios in a near-exact virtual environment. Tactical groups training in NAWCAD's JSE fly more sorties over one week than they do over a year on open-air ranges.

"Open-air ranges are extremely constrained with safety limitations that prevent warfighters from training like they'd fight," said NAWCAD JSE Director Blaine Summers. "The JSE is where fifth-gen fighters train to hone their tactics and fight

like their lives depend on it.”

Developed by Navy engineers and industry partners, NAWCAD’s JSE is a powerful training and test facility designed to adapt and grow, utilizing hardware and software from actual DOD aircraft, weapons, and other defense systems. The JSE has all the equipment and experts needed to keep the facility running smoothly from its cockpits, to its software and simulators, to its mission debriefing rooms where pilots get feedback on their performance during training.

In this highly realistic digital range, aviators experience the consequences of their mistakes, including mission failure, loss of systems, and even loss of life. The JSE enables pilots to learn those hard lessons, immediately adjust, fly again, and continue the learning process to become a highly capable tactical aviator.

The JSE was initially designed to support F-35 Lightning’s operational testing as there was no way to safely and adequately represent real-world conflict on an open-air range. Today, the DOD is scaling the Navy’s technology for additional digital range facilities supporting programs like F-35, F-22, and E-2D. In addition, the DOD has made training in the JSE a formal part of the Navy’s Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor Program—commonly known as TOPGUN.

Over the next year, NAWCAD will incorporate additional test and training cockpits including the F/A-18 Hornet, EA-18 Growler, and E-2 platforms to train fighters for future flight lines. The warfare center will also deploy its second training system onboard a Navy carrier, USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division employs more than 17,000 military, civilian and contract personnel. It operates test ranges, laboratories and aircraft in support of test, evaluation, research, development and sustainment of everything flown by the Navy and Marine Corps. Based in

Patuxent River, Maryland, the command also has major sites in St. Inigoes, Maryland, Lakehurst, New Jersey, and Orlando, Florida.

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## **April 1 Red Sea Update**

U.S. Central Command, April 1, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At 9 a.m. (Sanaa time) April 1, United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed an Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist unmanned surface vessel (USV) in self-defense.

It was determined this USV presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region.

These actions are necessary to protect our forces, ensure freedom of navigation, and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.