

# For First Time, Australian Submariner Earns US Dolphins



YOKOSUKA, Japan (Dec. 12, 2024) – Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, commander, Submarine Group 7, and Royal Australian Navy Lt. Cmdr. James pose for a photo during pier-side quarters for the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Vermont (SSN 792) at Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Dec. 12. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Daniel G. Providakes) (This photo has been altered and last name withheld per Royal Australian Navy protocols)  
From Lt. Cmdr. Samuel Boyle, Submarine Group 7 Public Affairs, Dec. 17, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan– The U.S. Navy qualified the first Royal Australian Navy officer on a nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarine at Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Dec. 12. In a pier-side ceremony, Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, commander, Submarine Group 7 awarded Royal Australian Navy Lt. Cmdr. James\* the first U.S. Navy Submarine Warfare Device earned by

a Royal Australian Navy submariner.

James earned the warfare device, or “dolphins”, while embarked aboard the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Vermont (SSN 792) during a deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, demonstrating another significant milestone for the Australia, United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership.

“It is always an honor to pin dolphins on a Sailor’s uniform and welcome them into an elite community of undersea warfighters,” said Cavanaugh. “Today’s pinning represents the strength of the alliance and our continued progress under the AUKUS agreement. This was an historic pinning, but it is only the first of many to come.”

In order to qualify, a Sailor must exhibit a strong understanding of all submarines systems, compartments, and equipment. James had already qualified on a diesel electric Collins-class submarine but was the first Royal Australian Navy submariner to qualify on a nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarine.

“All of the extra sensors that the boat has, and the fact that we can remain deployed for so long at such high speeds will be game changing for Australia,” said James. “[Qualifying] is a culmination of a lot of hard work and a lot of support from the crew. I’m incredibly thankful to everybody that has supported me through this adventure. And it makes me incredibly proud to serve both my navy and your navy.”

There are currently more than 100 Royal Australian Navy officers in the U.S. Navy submarine training pipeline or assigned to U.S. Virginia-class SSNs. Military training efforts under the AUKUS Pillar 1 effort are designed to enable Australia to operate, maintain, and support a sovereign fleet of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines to deter aggression and enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Vermont, part of Submarine Squadron 1, has been on deployment since it departed its homeport of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Aug. 8, and arrived in Yokosuka, Japan, Dec. 9, for a port visit.

Submarine Group 7 directs forward-deployed, combat capable forces across the full spectrum of undersea warfare throughout the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

\*Per Royal Australian Navy protocols, submariners' last names are not publicly released.

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## **CENTCOM Conducts Precision Airstrike Against Iran-Backed Houthi Facility in Yemen**

From U.S. Central Command, Dec. 16, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – On Dec. 16 Yemen time, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces conducted a precision airstrike against a key command and control facility operated by Iran-backed Houthis within Houthi-controlled territory in Sana'a, Yemen.

The targeted facility was a hub for coordinating Houthi operations, such as attacks against U.S. Navy warships and merchant vessels in the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

The strike reflects CENTCOM's ongoing commitment to protect

U.S. and coalition personnel, regional partners, and international shipping.

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## **Harry S. Truman Strike Group Enters U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility**



From Commander U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs, Dec. 16, 2024

MANAMA, Bahrain – The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) entered the U.S. Central command area of responsibility, Dec 14.

The carrier strike group consists of the flagship Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75); Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1 with nine embarked aviation squadrons; staffs from Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 8, CVW-1, and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28; the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64); and two Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, USS Stout (DDG 55) and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109).

The HSTCSG last deployed in the U.S. Central command area of responsibility in March 2020.

The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group is ready, if called upon, to execute the full spectrum of carrier operations essential to U.S. national security, including the defense of U.S. and partner forces and personnel and freedom of navigation to ensure maritime security and stability in the U.S. Central command area of responsibility.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses approximately 2.5 million square miles of water space and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal and Strait of Bab al-Mandeb.

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## **SECNAV Del Toro Names Future Frigate USS Joy Bright Hancock (FFG 69)**

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Dec. 16, 2024

NEWPORT, R.I. – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro

announced that a future Constellation-class Guided Missile Frigate, FFG 69, will be named USS Joy Bright Hancock, Dec. 16.

Secretary Del Toro made the announcement at the 11th Women, Peace and Security Symposium, hosted by the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

The future USS Joy Bright Hancock honors her namesake's trailblazing service beginning as a Yeoman in World War I, and her integral role in passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948. This will be the first U.S. Navy vessel named for Hancock.

"We—men and women alike—must contribute to the meaningful participation of women in the armed forces to increase combat readiness and operational effectiveness. Captain Joy Bright Hancock was a trailblazer who paved the way for generations of women to proudly serve this great Nation," said Secretary Del Toro. "That is why, I am incredibly pleased to announce that a Constellation-class frigate, FFG 69, will be named the USS Joy Bright Hancock."

The naming selection honors Captain Joy Bright Hancock (1898–1986). Born in New Jersey, Hancock received degrees from the George Washington University and the Crawford School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC; the Pierce School of Business Administration in Philadelphia; and the Paris Branch of the New York School of Fine Arts.

During World War I, Hancock was a Yeoman (F) First Class on duty at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation in Camden, New Jersey. By then end of the war she was Chief Yeoman at the U.S. Naval Air Station in Cape May, New Jersey. Between 1934 and 1942 she was the civilian head of Editorial and Research Section of the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics and the Special Assistant to the Bureau's Chief. In the first year of World War II she was commissioned Lieutenant, Women's Reserve, U.S.

Naval Reserve, also known as WAVES. In February 1946 she became the director of WAVES and advanced through rank to Captain in the Naval Reserve by 26 July 1946.

Captain Hancock, who was instrumental in the passage of the Women's Armed Service Integration Act of 1948, was one of eight women to be sworn into the regular Navy and was subsequently appointed Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Women. She retired from active duty in June 1953. During her long career, Captain Hancock received commendations for her service to the Bureau of Naval Aeronautics and the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air) during WWII, as well as for her assistance in expanding opportunities for women in the Navy. In recognition of her trailblazing career, the Navy now annually awards the Joy Bright Hancock Award to honor the visionary leadership of officers whose ideals foster an inclusive culture while furthering the integration of women in the Navy. There have been no previous Navy vessels named for Joy Bright Hancock.

The future USS Joy Bright Hancock will be the tenth of the new Constellation-class frigates. The other ships in the class are USS Constellation (FFG 62), USS Congress (FFG 63), USS Chesapeake (FFG 64), USS Lafayette (FFG 65), and USS Hamilton (FFG 66). Secretary Del Toro named the future USS Lafayette (FFG 65) in 2023, and the future USS Hamilton (FFG 66) and future USS Galvez (FFG 67) in 2024. FFG 68 will be named in 2025.

The Constellation-class guided-missile frigate represents the Navy's next generation small surface combatant. This ship class will be an agile, multi-mission warship, capable of operations in both blue-water and littoral environments, providing increased combat-credible forward presence that provides a military advantage at sea.

The Constellation-class will have multi-mission capability to conduct air warfare, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare,

electronic warfare, and information operations.

More information on guided missile frigates can be found [here](#).

Read Secretary Del Toro's [full remarks online](#).

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## **Rite-Solutions Receives \$13.5 Million Unmanned Undersea Vehicle Task Order**

From Rite-Solutions, Dec. 16, 2024

MIDDLETOWN, RI (December 16, 2024)—Rite-Solutions was recently awarded a four-year, \$13.5 million task order by the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Newport Undersea Warfare Platform and Payload Integration Department (Code 45).

Rite-Solutions will continue supporting Code 45's Topside Command, Control and Communications (Topside C3) software system, autonomy and vehicle control software services for unmanned systems— an innovative and emerging payload control software being developed for Navy submarines.

“We are very excited to continue our support to Code 45. We have grown a highly effective technical team supporting our customer's expanding role as the Navy's software support activity for unmanned undersea vehicles as they approach fleet introduction, bringing a new dimension of intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance to the submarine mission,” said Laura Deady, Rite-Solutions Senior Vice President and head of the Engineering Systems Business Unit.

Under the new task order, awarded under the Unmanned Undersea Vehicle (UUV) family of Systems Multiple Award Contract, Rite-Solutions will collaborate with teammate McLaughlin Research Corporation (MRC) to provide software support services in maintaining, upgrading and distributing UUV mission command/control/communications capabilities to the fleet.

“Rite-Solutions is committed to developing our employees’ impact on current and future defense workforce. We make significant training and educational investment in our people to ensure they are positioned to deliver the best possible support to our warfighters’ needs,” said Joe Marino, Rite-Solutions Co-founder and CEO. “This win demonstrates our commitment to deploying our talented workforce to assist Code 45 and all our customers with mission-critical solutions that are focused on delivering new technical capabilities to the fleet.”

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## **USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. & USS Michael Murphy Return to Pearl Harbor after Deployment**



Sailors man the rails aboard USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121) as the ship arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. (Ensign Paula Hackbart)

**From U.S. Pacific Fleet, Dec. 13, 2024**

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) returned to their homeport, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Dec. 12, after a five-month deployment assigned to the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group (ABECSG).

The USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is the most capable CSG comprised of the air wing of the future, the most advanced Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Frank E. Peterson Jr. (DDG 121) as Integrated Air and Missile Defense Commander, and the Arleigh Burke destroyers assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, representing more than 6,000 Sailors, deployed from their homeports of San Diego and Pearl Harbor since July 2024.

ABECSG initially deployed to the Indo-Pacific region to support regional security and stability, and to reassure our

allies and partners of the U.S. Navy's unwavering commitment, highlighted by the first-ever U.S.-Italy multi-large deck event (MLDE) with the Italian Navy's ITS Cavour Carrier Strike Group held in the Indo-Pacific on Aug. 9, 2024.

The strike group was ordered to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility to bolster U.S. military force posture in the Middle East, deter regional escalation, degrade Houthi capabilities, defend U.S. forces, and again sailed alongside our Italian allies and other partners to promote security, stability and prosperity. Assigned destroyers of the ABESCG, to include Frank E. Petersen Jr. and Michael Murphy, were essential to providing a layer of defense to U.S. forces and ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels and partner nations transiting in international waterways like the Red Sea, Bab-al-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden.

The destroyers worked alongside other U.S. Central Command forces in successfully repelling multiple Iranian-backed Houthi attacks during transits of the Bab el-Mandeb strait. During the transit, the destroyers were attacked by one-way attack uncrewed Aerial systems, anti-ship ballistic missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles which were successfully engaged and defeated. The vessels were not damaged and no personnel were hurt. The ships were well prepared, supported, and the well-trained Sailors performed admirably to successfully defend the ship.

"What the crew of USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. achieved during this deployment was extraordinary. We did not have many port visits or downtime, but what was achieved could only be done through the spirit and drive of exceptional Sailors. This deployment will be remembered by its impactful operations and what our Sailors experienced by adapting and overcoming to meet all challenges," said Capt. Kevin Louis, commanding officer, Frank E. Petersen Jr. "What we accomplished as a team and with support from our Carrier Strike Group and the Joint

Force will set a standard for future operations. We can return home to our loved ones with a great deal of pride and satisfaction knowing we made a difference.”

Throughout deployment, Frank E. Petersen Jr. completed over 475 hours of flight quarters, 10 hours of small boat operations, conducted 17 replenishments-at-sea, 15 sea and anchor details, qualified 60 Sailors in small craft action team (SCAT) and 17 Sailors in Security Reaction Force Basic (SRF-B). Frank E. Petersen Jr. also welcomed six new chief petty officers, six new first class petty officers and 18 new second class petty officers.

“This deployment has been filled with so many first of its kind type events. I can proudly say Michael Murphy was repeatedly called upon to ‘Lead the Fight’ due to this crew’s amazing reputation and success,” said Cmdr. Jonathan B. Greenwald, commanding officer, Michael Murphy. “To say I am proud of this team is an understatement. This deployment has been an opportunity of a lifetime to serve alongside 360 amazing Sailors. It is so good to be home and I know our Sailors are so happy to return to their families and friends,”

Michael Murphy traveled 44,689 nautical miles throughout U.S. 3rd, 7th, 5th, and 6th Fleet, completed 748 hours of flight operations, transferred 3,524,527 gallons of F-76, executed 21 replenishments-at-sea, and completed 11 strait transits, totaling 75 hours in restricted waters.

Frank E. Petersen Jr. was led by their commanding officer, Capt. Kevin Louis, executive officer, Cmdr. Sean Standen, and Command Master Chief, Command Master Chief Justin Bowen.

Michael Murphy was led by their commanding officer, Cmdr. Jonathan B. Greenwald, executive officer, Cmdr. Caitlin E. Cunningham, and Command Master Chief, Command Master Chief

Johnetta L. Heckard.

Deploying units of the strike group include the flagship USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), DESRON 21, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9, and Frank E. Petersen Jr. While the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, assigned to DESRON 21, USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) returned to its homeport, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS O’Kane (DDG 77) and USS Stockdale (DDG 106) remain deployed in the 5th Fleet area of operations supporting global maritime security operations.

As an integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic and relevant training necessary to execute the U.S. Navy’s timeless role across the full spectrum of military operations—from combat missions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.

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## **SECNAV Announces Sponsors of Future USS Charles J. French**

# SEAPOWERS

The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Dec. 12, 2024

WASHINGTON DC (Dec. 12, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced the sponsors of the future USS Charles J. French (DDG 142) will be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Shalanda Young and the late French’s great niece, Ms. Vanessa French Wilson.

Del Toro made the announcement during a ship naming celebration held at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, in Washington DC, on Dec. 12.

Sponsors are selected by the Secretary of the Navy and hold a unique role of maintaining a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“The bond forged between a sponsor and their ship is a testament to the enduring spirit of the sea and the unwavering dedication of those who serve upon its waters,” said Del Toro. “I am honored to announce, today, that Director Shalanda Young and Ms. Vanessa French Wilson have accepted the invitation to serve as sponsors of this great ship.”

Shalanda Young, Director of OMB, joined Secretary Del Toro for the announcement.

“It is a profound honor to be named the sponsor of the USS Charles J. French,” said Director Young. “This ship will carry an important legacy, marking French’s bravery, resilience and duty after his vessel was attacked during the Pacific Theatre of World War II. Without hesitation, French rescued his fellow sailors and swam through the night to bring them to safety, risking his life to ensure fifteen others could live theirs. For too long, French was denied the recognition he deserved from the government. But today, I am proud to immortalize the memory and service of one of America’s most courageous heroes.”

In January, Secretary Del Toro named the ship after Charles J. French during remarks at the Surface Navy Association 36th National Symposium. The ship’s naming honors the tradition of naming Arleigh Burke-class DDGs after Navy and Marine Corps heroes.

Charles Jackson French was a Navy Mess Specialist 1st Class Petty Officer the night the USS Gregory (APD 3) was sunk by Japanese destroyers during the WWII Battle of Guadalcanal. French saved the lives of more than a dozen Sailors by swimming through the night, dragging a raft full of injured shipmates through shark-infested waters.

For his actions, French received a letter of commendation from Adm. William “Bull” Halsey, then commander of the Southern Pacific Fleet. In May 2022, he was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his heroic actions. The award was presented at Naval Base San Diego, during a ceremony dedicating the base’s rescue swimmer training pool in French’s honor

“The naming of the USS Charles J. French (DDG 142) is a

joyful, yet humbling experience for the French family,” said Ms. Wilson, the newly named co-sponsor of the future DDG 142. “Thank you, Secretary Del Toro, for choosing to acknowledge the heroism of Charles Jackson French.”

Fabrication of the ship is projected for 2026 with a projected keel laying set for 2027, projected christening in 2029, and delivery projected for 2031.

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, built around the Aegis Combat System, are the backbone of the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet providing protection to America around the globe. They incorporate stealth techniques, allowing these highly capable, multi-mission ships to conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence to national security, providing a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface domains. These elements of sea power enable the Navy to defend American prosperity and prevent future conflict abroad.

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## **U.S Navy Accepts Delivery of USNS Robert F. Kennedy**



SAN DIEGO – John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) delivered to the Navy on Dec. 10. By Team Ships Strategic Operations, Dec. 11, 2024

SAN DIEGO – John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) delivered to the Navy on Dec. 10.

Delivery follows the completion of Integrated Sea Trials where the ship's readiness and capabilities are tested and validated to delivery requirements.

“This delivery is a significant milestone as we bring another oiler to our fleet and increase our replenishment underway capabilities,” said John Lighthammer, program manager, Auxiliary and Special Mission Ships, Program Executive Office, Ships (PEO Ships). “This is the final stepping stone in getting this essential ship to our civilian mariners in need of its tools.

John Lewis-class ships (T-AOs) are operated by Military

Sealift Command and feature substantial volume for oil; significant dry cargo capacity; and aviation capability. T-AOs provide additional capacity to the Navy's Combat Logistics Force and are a cornerstone of the Navy's fuel delivery system.

General Dynamics NASSCO, the shipbuilder, is also in production on T-AOs USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209), USNS Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210), USNS Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211), and USNS Ruth Bader Ginsburg (T-AO 212). The future USNS Harriet Tubman (T-AO 213) and USNS Dolores Huerta (T-AO 214) are under contract. Additionally, a Block Buy contract was issued in September 2024 for the detail design and construction of T-AO 214-221.

PEO Ships, one of the Department of Defense's largest acquisition organizations, 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.

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## **CENTCOM Forces Defeat Houthi Attacks on U.S. Navy and U.S.-Flagged Ships in the Gulf of Aden**

From U.S. Central Command, Dec. 10, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – U.S. Navy destroyers USS Stockdale (DDG 106) and USS O'Kane (DDG 77) successfully defeated a range of Houthi-launched weapons while transiting the Gulf of Aden, Dec. 9 –

10.

The destroyers were escorting three U.S. owned, operated, and flagged merchant vessels. The reckless attacks resulted in no injuries and no damage to any vessels, civilians or U.S. Naval.

The destroyers successfully engaged and defeated multiple one-way attack uncrewed aerial systems (OWA UAS), and one anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM), ensuring the safety of the ships and their personnel, as well as civilian vessels and their crews. During a transit on Nov. 30 – Dec. 1, [the destroyers successfully defeated an Iran-backed Houthi attack.](#)

These actions reflect the ongoing commitment of CENTCOM forces to protect U.S. personnel, regional partners, and international shipping against attacks by Iran-backed Houthis.

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## **SaiDrone Awarded Contract to Map Florida's Coastal Waters**



Two Saildrone Voyager USVs equipped with NORBIT WINGHEAD i80s echo sounders for high-resolution mapping will survey 2,817 square kilometers of seafloor in the Gulf of Mexico.

From Saildrone, Dec. 12, 2024

St. Petersburg, Fla. – Saildrone has been selected by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to map Florida’s coastal waters in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the [Florida Seafloor Mapping Initiative \(FSMI\)](#), a multiyear effort to provide statewide stakeholders with accessible, high-quality, and high-resolution seafloor data of Florida’s coastal waters within the continental shelf. Updated mapping data of coastal systems is critical for protecting offshore infrastructure, habitat mapping, restoration projects, emergency response, coastal resilience, and hazard studies for the state’s citizens.

Saildrone has been tasked with collecting high-resolution multibeam data in a region known as Middle Grounds. The mission, valued at \$1.66M, will use two 10-meter Saildrone Voyager uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) equipped with NORBIT WINGHEAD i80s echo sounders for high-resolution mapping, and radar, AIS, and cameras for maritime domain awareness.

Saildrone will map 2,817 square kilometers of seafloor, approximately 130 kilometers northwest of St. Petersburg.

“Mapping the Florida coastline is vital for understanding our dynamic coastal environments, supporting sustainable resource management, and enhancing resilience against extreme weather events. FSMI will provide critical insights that empower policymakers, researchers, and local communities to protect vital ecosystems and infrastructure along Florida’s coasts,” said Brian Connon, Saildrone VP Ocean Mapping. “Saildrone USVs efficiently and safely collect high-resolution bathymetric data while minimizing environmental impact.”

At 2,170 kilometers long, Florida’s coastline is second only to Alaska among US states. Many parts of the Florida coast remain unsurveyed, with existing nautical charts relying on outdated and low-resolution data.

FSMI builds on the efforts of the [Florida Coastal Mapping Program \(FCMaP\)](#), an initiative led by federal and Florida state agencies and other community stakeholders to generate a comprehensive high-resolution seafloor data set of Florida’s coastal waters by 2028. The data will be available for immediate use to update navigational charts and identify navigation hazards, provide fundamental baseline data for scientific research, and provide information for use by emergency managers and responders.

The data Saildrone collects will help better understand Florida’s coastal vulnerability and hurricane impact, evaluate the performance of restoration projects, and support ongoing coastal resilience efforts and flood risk mapping.