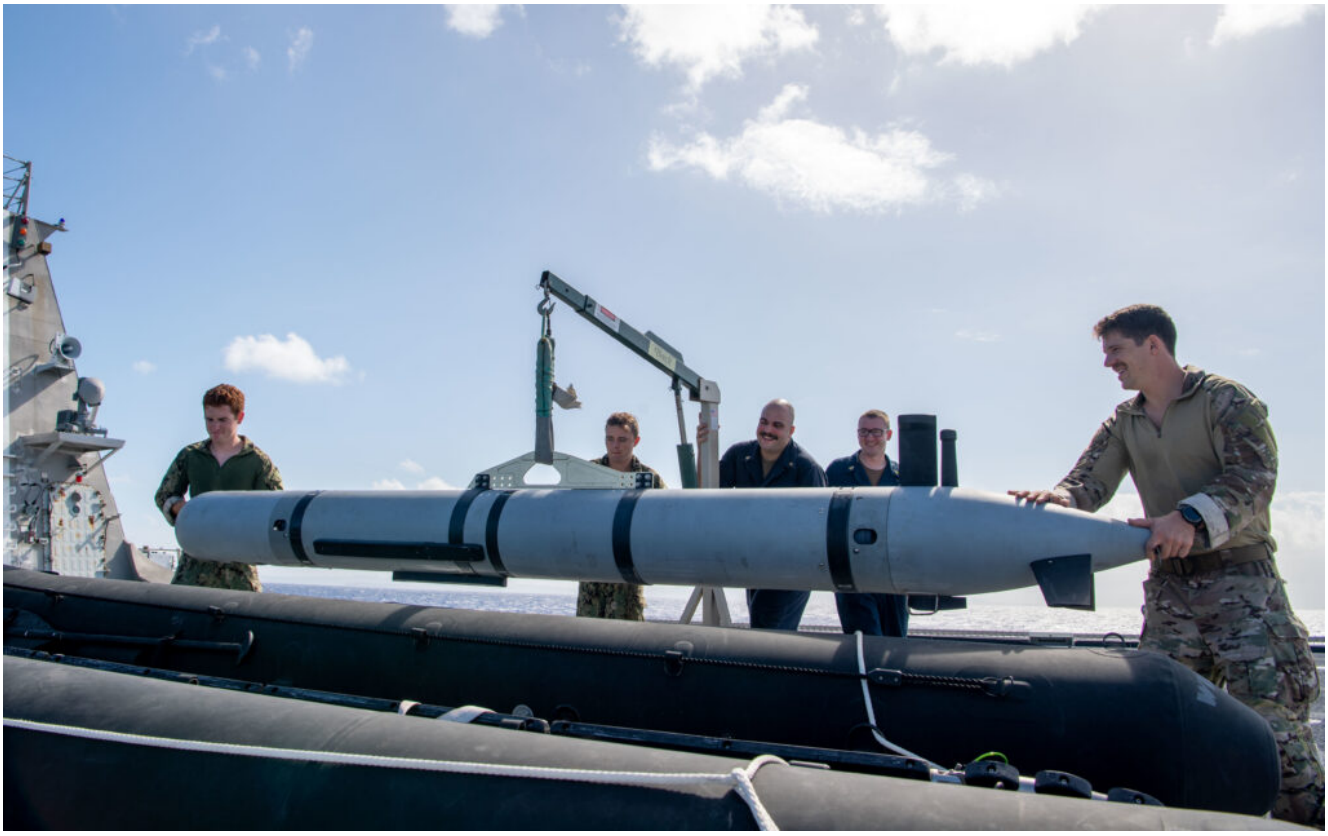
SeeByte to Extend U.S. Navy Autonomous Systems and Machine Learning Capability



Sailors assigned to the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Charleston (LCS 18) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 5 transport a simulated Mark 18 Mod 2 Kingfish unmanned underwater vehicle during a mine countermeasures exercise. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan M. Breeden*

EDINBURGH – SeeByte Ltd, a developer of smart software solutions for uncrewed maritime systems, has been awarded an indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract to support the U.S. Navy's Mk18 Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle Family of Systems program, the company announced in a Nov. 29 release.

The awarded IDIQ has a total potential value of $87 million and a duration of up to 10 years. Under this contract, SeeByte will provide engineering, technical support, training and

simulation services including upgrades to SeeByte's Mission-Level Autonomy system, Neptune, development of Automatic Target Recognition modules and a bespoke training and simulation toolkit (Unmanned Systems Simulator).

The U.S. Navy uses the Mk18 Mod 1 Swordfish and Mk1 Mod 2 Kingfish UUVs for mine countermeasures.

7th Fleet Cruiser Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea

Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville conducts routine underway operations in the South China Sea, Nov. 29, 2022. *U.S. NAVY*

SPRATLY ISLANDS, South China Sea – On Nov. 29, 2022, USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

At the conclusion of the operation, USS Chancellorsville exited the excessive claim area and continued operations in the South China Sea. The freedom of navigation operation ("FONOP") upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam and Taiwan.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade, and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.

USS Chancellorsville conducted this FONOP in accordance with international law and then continued on to conduct normal operations in waters where high seas freedoms apply. The operation reflects continued commitment to uphold freedom of navigation and lawful uses of the sea as a principle. The United States is defending every nation's right to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows, as USS Chancellorsville did here.

The PLA Southern Theater Command's statement about the operation is the latest in a long string of PRC actions to misrepresent lawful U.S. maritime operations and assert its excessive and illegitimate maritime claims at the expense of its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea. The PRC's behaviors stands in contrast to the United States' adherence to international law and our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. All nations, large and small, should be secure in their sovereignty, free from coercion, and able

to pursue economic growth consistent with accepted international rules and norms.

The PRC's statement about this mission is false.

The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. Customary international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention provides for certain rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea to all nations. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability and prosperity.

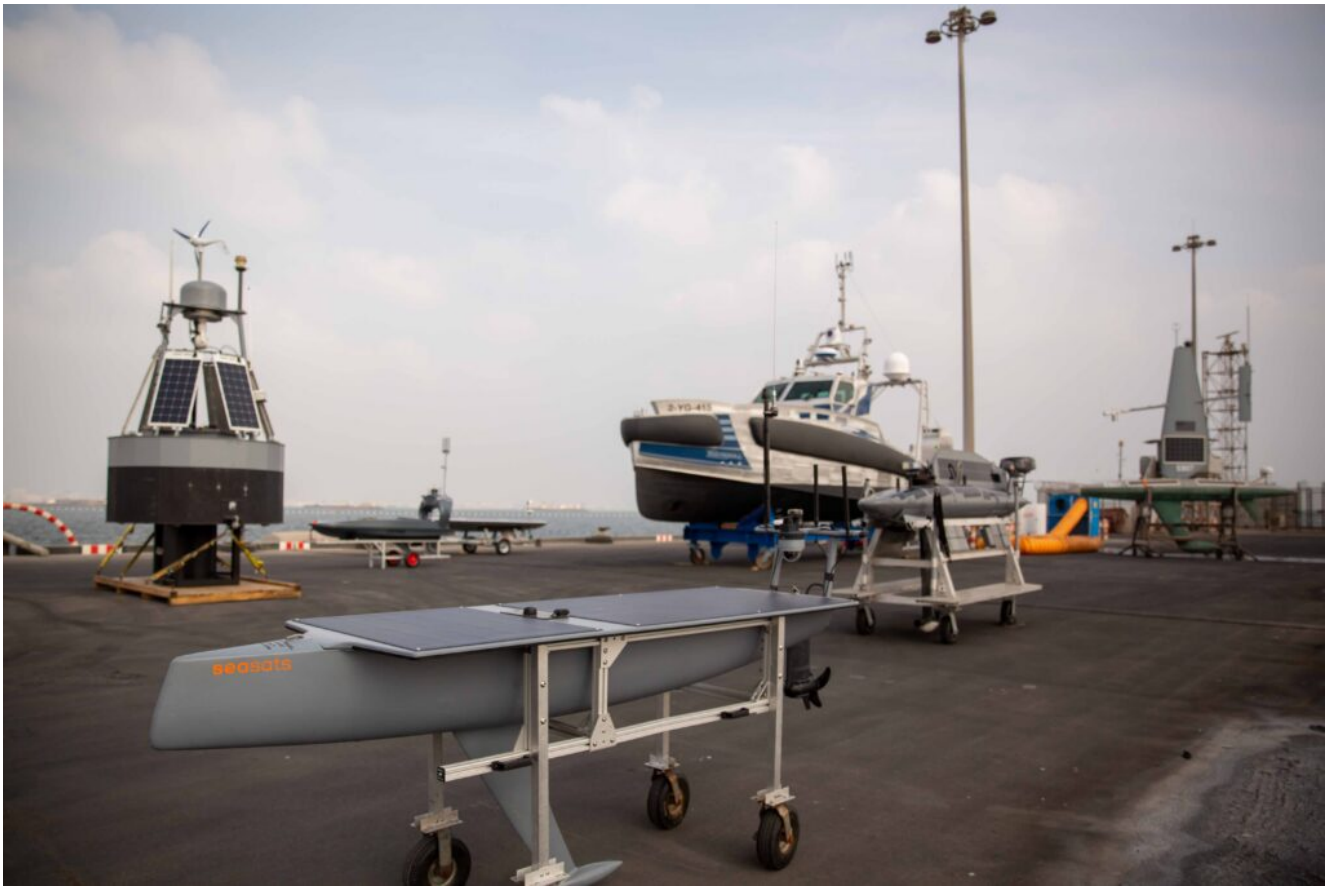
The United States upholds freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.

The PRC, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines each claim sovereignty over some or all of the Spratly Islands. The PRC, Vietnam and Taiwan purport to require either permission or advance notification before a foreign military vessel engages in "innocent passage" through the territorial sea. Under customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention, the ships of all states – including their warships – enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea. International law does not allow for the unilateral imposition of any authorization or advance-notification requirement for innocent passage, so the United States challenged these requirements. By engaging in innocent passage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United States challenged the unlawful restrictions imposed by the PRC, Taiwan and Vietnam. The United States demonstrated that

innocent passage is not subject to such restrictions.

U.S. forces operate in the South China Sea on a daily basis, as they have for more than a century. They routinely operate in close coordination with like-minded allies and partners who share our commitment to uphold a free and open international order that promotes security and prosperity. All of our operations are conducted safely, professionally and in accordance with international law. These operations demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows – regardless of the location of excessive maritime claims and regardless of current events.

U.S. Launches New Unmanned & AI Systems Integration Event



Various unmanned systems sit on display in Manama, Bahrain, Nov. 19, prior to exercise Digital Horizon 2022. The three-week unmanned and artificial intelligence integration event, beginning Nov. 23, will involve employing new platforms in the region for the first time. *U.S. ARMY / Sgt. Brandon Murphy*

MANAMA, Bahrain – U.S. 5th Fleet began a three-week unmanned and artificial intelligence integration event in Bahrain, Nov. 23, that will involve employing new platforms in the region for the first time, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Public Affairs said in a Nov. 23 release.

The event, called Digital Horizon, will advance the command's efforts to integrate new unmanned technologies while establishing the world's first unmanned surface vessel fleet by end of next summer. U.S. 5th Fleet's efforts are focused on improving what U.S. and regional navies are able to see above, on and below the water.

"I am excited about the direction we are headed," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "By

harnessing these new unmanned technologies and combining them with artificial intelligence, we will enhance regional maritime security and strengthen deterrence. This benefits everybody.”

Cooper established a staff called Task Force 59 in September 2021 to speed new tech integration across U.S. 5th Fleet. Since its launch, the task force has deployed a suite of new unmanned systems from operational hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan.

Digital Horizon will include 17 industry partners bringing 15 different types of systems, 10 of which will operate with U.S. 5th Fleet for the first time.

The unmanned aerial vehicles will include two vertical take-off and landing systems, Aerovel’s Flexrotor and Shield AI’s V-BAT as well as Easy Aerial’s tethered UAV. The unmanned surface vessels will include the Elbit Systems Seagull, Exail DriX, L3Harris Arabian Fox MAST-13, Marine Advanced Robotics WAM-V, MARTAC T-38 Devil Ray, Ocean Aero TRITON, Open Ocean Robotics Data Xplorer, Saildrone Explorer, Seasats X3 and SeaTrac SP-48.

Industry partners Accenture Federal Services and Big Bear AI will also employ data integration and artificial intelligence systems during the event, and Silvus Technologies will provide line-of-sight radio communications while an unmanned surface vessel from Ocius participates from off the coast of Western Australia.

“The pace of innovation is amazing,” said Capt. Michael Brasseur, commander of Task Force 59. “We are challenging our industry partners in one of the most difficult operational environments, and they are responding with enhanced capability, fast. I am extremely proud of the entire team, including our many partners across government, academia, and industry for their commitment to Digital Horizon, as we

discover new capability together.”

Over the past year, Task Force 59 operated USVs in regional waters for more than 25,000 hours, which equates to 12 years of nine-to-five testing five days a week. The Saildrone Explorer USV in particular has operated at sea for as long as 220 consecutive days without refueling or maintenance.

NAVCENT is headquartered in Manama, Bahrain and includes maritime forces operating in 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 Bab al-Mandeb.

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Returns to Homeport Concluding Inaugural Deployment

The USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) returns to Naval Station Norfolk after completing their inaugural deployment to the Atlantic Ocean with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Nov. 26. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist First Class Nathan T. Beard*

NORFOLK – The first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), flagship of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG), returned to Naval Station Norfolk, after successfully completing its inaugural deployment throughout the Atlantic while conducting exercises and port visits with allies and partners, Nov. 26, the U.S. 2nd Fleet said in a release

The flagship set sail from Norfolk, Virginia, Oct. 4, and traveled more than 9,275 nautical miles with GRFCSG.

During the scheduled deployment, Ford operated with eight allies and partners – Canada, Denmark, Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden – to strengthen interoperability, while conducting a range of maritime operations and exercises.

“This deployment brought together an incredible group of Allies and partners with one single focus – to contribute to a peaceful, stable and conflict-free Atlantic region through our combined naval power,” said Vice Adm. Dan Dwyer, commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet and Joint Force Command Norfolk. “Opportunities to interoperate and integrate make our nations, our navies, and the NATO Alliance stronger.”

While deployed, GRFCSG participated in Exercise Silent Wolverine, demonstrating high-end naval warfare and integrated NATO interoperability in the maritime approaches to Europe. Silent Wolverine was an opportunity for Ford to train and test capabilities while demonstrating the U.S. commitment to Allies and partners through seamless integration.

“We sailed with our Allies and partners and trained together, tirelessly, day and night, and we are stronger for it,” said Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, Ford’s commanding officer. “Through integrated and combined operations such as live and inert ordnance expenditure by Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8, anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and air defense, we set the stage for operating with Ford-class technologies in a deployed environment. We completed more than 1,250 sorties, expended 78.3 tons of ordnance, and completed 13 underway replenishments – and we accomplished this because of what Ford-class aircraft carriers bring to the fight.”

The Sailors participating in Ford’s first deployment integrated multiple foreign nations’ ships into the strike group to operate together efficiently.

“Leading the men and women of the Gerald R. Ford Strike Group has been awe-inspiring. Every day these Sailors committed themselves 100% to a safe and successful inaugural deployment of Ford and the strike group,” said Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12. “This deployment laid a strong foundation for the strike group, created momentum to carry us forward for future operations, and has

prepared us to answer our nation’s call when needed.”

Ford made their first international port visit in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and their first European port visit in Portsmouth, U.K. For Ford Sailors, these port visits offered a long-awaited opportunity to explore and learn from different cultures.

Boatswain’s Mate 3rd Class Selena Penaloza, from Orlando, Florida, assigned to Ford’s deck department, has been stationed aboard Ford for three years before deploying for the first time.

“It was amazing getting to see the [ship’s] first deployment and my first port visit. This deployment has been a new experience for everyone onboard”, said Penaloza. “We’ve been working more than on other underways and standing more watch, and it’s all for a great cause.”

Ford is the first new U.S. aircraft carrier designed in more than 40 years, introducing 23 new technologies that offer impressive advances to its aircraft launch system, propulsion, power generation, ordnance handling and more. Ford’s advanced technologies reduce the amount of personnel required to maintain and operate the ship’s systems compared to Nimitz-class carriers.

“On our ship, you don’t hear Sailors saying, ‘that’s the way we’ve always done it’ because we’re using new gear, new technologies,” said Lanzilotta. “Our Sailors are the ones who make all of these new technologies real. The Sailors make it come to life. I am so proud of all their hard work and dedication that made Ford operational and allowed the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to conduct a successful first deployment.”

While operating in the Atlantic, Ford hosted 215 distinguished visitors, 175 foreign dignitaries, 46 NATO flag officers and senior enlisted leaders and more than 60 U.S. and

international reporters aboard.

The U.S. commands and units that participated in the GRFCSG deployment include; CSG 12, CVW 8, Destroyer Squadron 2, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60), Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers USS McFaul (DDG 74) and USS Ramage (DDG 61) stationed at Naval Station Norfolk in Norfolk, Virginia, and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) stationed at Naval Station Mayport in Mayport, Florida.

The nine U.S. aircraft squadrons assigned to CVW-8 that embarked Ford for this deployment were Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 213, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 37 and Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87 stationed at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Virginia; Electric Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142 stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island in Whidbey Island, Washington; Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 124; Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40; Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 70; and Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, stationed at Naval Station Norfolk in Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Declares Initial Operational Capability for Boeing’s HAAWC

In an artists rendering, a High Altitude Anti-Submarine Warfare Weapon Capability or HAAWC deploys from a Boeing P-8A Poseidon multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft. *BOEING*

ST. CHARLES, Mo. – Boeing's High Altitude Anti-Submarine Warfare Weapon Capability, or HAAWC, has satisfied all requirements for initial operational capability status from the U.S. Navy, the company said in a Nov. 22 release.

The all-weather HAAWC enables the Boeing P-8A Poseidon to deploy Mk54 torpedoes from near or below its cruising altitude.

"The initial operational capability milestone marks the

readiness of HAAWC for fleet introduction for the Navy and its international partners," said Dewayne Donley, Boeing's HAAWC program manager. "We're excited to deliver greater flexibility and capability by way of higher-altitude launches from longer distances than previously possible."

The milestone follows the award of a full-rate production contract for the system to Boeing in August, squadron training, and the receipt of low-rate initial production units.

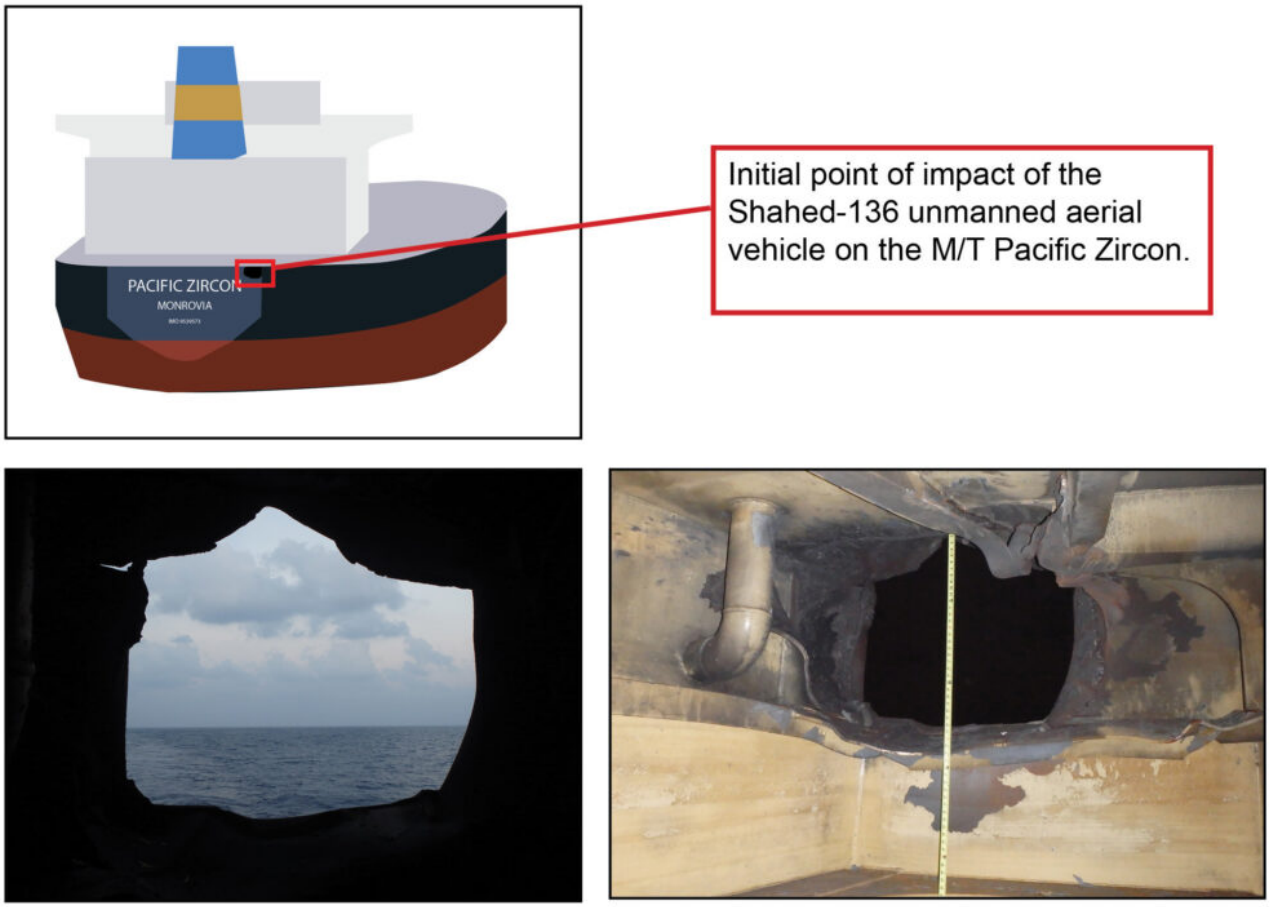
HAAWC consists of a modular Air Launch Accessory, or ALA, kit that attaches to a Mk54 torpedo, transforming it into a precision-guided glide weapon.

"It's a major achievement for our team in reaching our goal of establishing a new high ground in anti-submarine warfare," said Bob Ciesla, vice president of Boeing Weapons. "We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Navy toward the full deployment and operational capability of the system."

Additional fielding of HAAWC units are scheduled through 2024, with the potential for production to continue into 2030 under the current contract.

The long-range anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance P-8A aircraft has amassed more than 450,000 mishap-free flight-hours to date in support of broad-area, maritime and littoral operations, and performs humanitarian and search and rescue missions around the globe.

U.S. Navy Analysis Confirms Iranian Link to Drone Attack



Graphic illustration and images captured by a U.S. Navy explosive ordnance disposal team aboard M/T Pacific Zircon, Nov. 16, showing the location where an Iranian-made unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) penetrated M/T Pacific Zircon's outer hull during an attack Nov. 15. *U.S. NAVY*

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Navy lab in Bahrain has confirmed Iran's connection to a Nov. 15 aerial drone attack on a Liberian-flagged commercial tanker transiting international waters in the Middle East, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in a Nov. 22 release.

Two U.S. Navy explosive ordnance technicians boarded M/T Pacific Zircon, Nov. 16, to assess the damage and collect unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) debris fragments for forensic analysis. During a two-hour survey and evidence collection

process, the technicians also obtained explosive residue samples for lab testing.

U.S. 5th Fleet transported the gathered evidence to a lab at its Bahrain headquarters where technicians confirmed Iran's connection to the attack. The aerial drone that hit the commercial tanker was identified as a Shahed-136 UAV, fitting a historical pattern of Iran's increasing use of a lethal capability directly or through its proxies across the Middle East. Iran has supplied aerial drone technology to the Houthis in Yemen used in attacks against Saud Arabia and the United Arab Emirates earlier this year.

Additionally, the Shahed-136 platform is the same aerial drone Iran has supplied to Russia for use against Ukraine.

On Nov. 15, the explosive-laden aerial drone attacked Pacific Zircon at approximately 7:30 p.m. in the Northern Arabian Sea, tearing a 30-inch-wide hole into the back of the ship while subsequently penetrating and damaging internal compartments. The UAV's explosive impact also damaged a shipboard boiler, potable water tank and life raft.

"The Iranian attack on a commercial tanker transiting international waters was deliberate, flagrant and dangerous, endangering the lives of the ship's crew and destabilizing maritime security in the Middle East," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. Cooper also serves as the multinational task force commander for the International Maritime Security Construct, a 10-member naval coalition whose forces provide maritime security near the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb.

Upon learning of the attack, the British Royal Navy dispatched frigate HMS Lancaster (F229) to the scene. U.S. 5th Fleet also directed guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), patrol coastal ship USS Chinook (PC 9) and a P-8 Poseidon

maritime patrol aircraft to assist and assess the situation.

Navy Requests Concepts for Attritable Mother Ship for Unmanned Systems

The large unmanned surface vessel Nomad transits the Pacific Ocean to participate in Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022. The Navy's concept for a an attritable unmanned mother ship (AUMS) for delivering large numbers of unmanned systems could resemble a smaller version of a Project Overlord ship. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tyler R. Fraser*

ARLINGTO, Va. – The U.S. Navy has issued a Request for

Information for concepts for an attritable unmanned mother ship to “cost-effectively deliver large numbers of UxVs (unmanned systems) to forward locations in a contested environment,” the published notice of the request said.

The Attritable UxV Mother Ship (AUMS) Program stressed in the Oct. 31 announcement that the ship should cost as minimal as possible so that loss of such a ship would be acceptable.

The program office also said the AUMS concept “should explore modular open system approaches to have the ability to quickly insert the latest technology into a midlife upgrade.”

The RFI listed the following operational parameters for the AUMS:

- Open-ocean transit distance of 1,500 nautical miles (may vary from 1,000 to 2,000 depending on cost)
- Top speed from 12 to 20 knots
- Survivability in Sea State 5; full mission capability in Sea State 4
- Five days of operation without onboard human intervention
- Support of a 20-foot container (either towed or onboard, with capability to push it over the side); upon drop off, the container will be self-sustaining
- Be unmanned, capable of navigating via waypoints with GPS
- Have Over-the-Horizon and Line of Site Communications.
- Feature capability for resistance to boarding and tampering
- Self-scuttling capability upon remote order
- System will only traverse in the open ocean, will never operate less than three nautical miles from any shoreline untended.
- Minimum service of the vessel would be five years, with longer service life desired if obtainable for a small

cost increase

Government furnished equipment initially would include the command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C4I) suite and a modularized 20-foot ISO container with UxVs.

The Navy is aiming to award a design and construction by mid-2026, with delivery of the first AUMS withing 24 months of contract award.

The RFI was issued by the Unmanned Maritime Systems Program Office of the Program Executive Office (PEO) Unmanned and Small Combatants (USC). Responses must be received by Dec. 15.

HII Authenticates Keel of Virginia-Class Attack Submarine Arkansas

From left, NNS President Jennifer Boykin looks on as members of the Little Rock Nine, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed Wair assisted by PCU Arkansas commanding officer Cmdr. Adam Kahnke, Elizabeth Eckford, Gloria Ray Karlmark and Carlotta Walls Lanier, etch their initials onto steel plates during the keel authentication ceremony for Virginia-class submarine Arkansas (SSN 800) on Nov. 19, 2022. *HII / Ashley Cowan*

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – HII's Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) division hosted a keel authentication ceremony Nov. 19 for Virginia-class submarine Arkansas (SSN 800), the company said in a release.

The ship's sponsors are the six women of the historic group known as the Little Rock Nine, the first African American students to attend all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas during desegregation. NNS honored all nine members, including the three men, during Saturday's ceremony.

The Little Rock Nine made history in 1957 with their response to the Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education, declaring racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Faced with shouting mobs, threats of violence and hostile state leaders who blocked their way, the teenagers were escorted into the school by federal troops at

the direction of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

“Their courageous spirit will forever inspire Arkansas and her crew. This group forever changed our nation’s history and their submarine will help ensure their legacy continues,” NNS President Jennifer Boykin said. “The bravery and resilience of the Little Rock Nine sparked a fire of change and demonstrated the strength of blending different perspectives and backgrounds. We harness this strength in the shipyard every day. Our diversity allows us to extend beyond our own limits, to reach new heights and build each boat even better than the one before it. Arkansas will be proof of this power.”

During the ceremony, NNS welders etched a historic six sets of initials of the Little Rock Nine onto metal plates, signifying the keel of SSN 800 as being “truly and fairly laid.” The metal plates will remain affixed to the submarine throughout its life.

“(Former Navy) Secretary Ray Mabus asked us to be supporters of the ship and its crew. I signed on to be a foster grandmother,” said Elizabeth Eckford, a member of the Little Rock Nine, who spoke on behalf of the group during the ceremony. “President Eisenhower sent 1,000 paratroopers to Little Rock to disperse a mob, bring order and they made it possible for us to enter Central High School. From that point, I’ve had very high regard for specially trained forces.”

Arkansas is the 27th Virginia-class fast attack submarine being built under the teaming agreement with General Dynamics Electric Boat.

“With advances in sound silencing, acoustic sensors and weapons delivery systems, Arkansas will traverse the world’s oceans and seas as an apex predator. Representing our asymmetric advantage in the undersea domain, the Arkansas will have no equal,” said Vice Adm. William Houston, commander, Naval Submarine Forces.

“It is an incredible honor for the crew to begin to establish the relationship with our namesake state of Arkansas as well as with the ship’s sponsors,” said Cmdr. Adam Kahnke, commanding officer of the pre-commissioning unit. “The story of the Little Rock Nine demonstrates the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. I find the relationship with the ship’s sponsors very appropriate due to the fact that perseverance is an essential attribute to success in the art of submarine warfare.”

NNS is one of only two shipyards capable of designing and building nuclear-powered submarines. The advanced capabilities of Virginia-class submarines increase firepower, maneuverability and stealth.

This milestone on Arkansas comes following the delivery of USS Montana (SSN 794), the launch of New Jersey (SSN 796) and continued progress on Massachusetts (SSN 798) at NNS earlier in 2022, as the shipyard continues to invest in its workforce and facilities to make steady progress on delivering these important assets to the Navy.

Interagency Delegation Visits Unmanned & AI Task Force in Bahrain

Capt. Michael Brasseur, commander of Task Force 59, briefs Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr. Colin Kahl at a display of unmanned surface vessels in Manama, Bahrain, Nov. 18. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Mark Thomas Mahmod*

MANAMA, Bahrain – Senior U.S. government officials from the Department of Defense and Department of State visited U.S. 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain, Nov. 18, to learn about the ongoing integration of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence across the fleet, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in a release.

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr. Colin Kahl visited with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara A. Leaf and Dana Stroul, the deputy assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, as well as other U.S. officials.

U.S. 5th Fleet’s unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force, Task Force 59, displayed unmanned surface vessels on the pier after a tour of the Robotics Operations Center.

“The pace of technological change offers tremendous opportunities for upgrading how the U.S. military contributes to security and stability in the Middle East, and how we advance cooperation with partners,” said Dr. Kahl. “Task Force 59 is doing incredible work innovating and leading coalitions that ensure freedom of navigation in some of the world’s most critical waterways.”

In addition, the group toured RFA Cardigan Bay (L3009), a British Royal Navy vessel stationed in Bahrain in support of the United Kingdom’s regional naval headquarters. Royal Navy headquarters in the Middle East are co-located with U.S. 5th Fleet’s, reflecting strong collaboration among longstanding maritime partners.

The interagency delegation also visited U.S. 5th Fleet’s headquarters for discussions on regional maritime operations with Vice Adm. Brad Cooper and his staff. Cooper commands U.S. 5th Fleet as well as two major multinational maritime partnerships, which include the Combined Maritime Forces and International Maritime Security Construct.

The U.S. 5th Fleet operating area includes 21 countries, the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb and Suez Canal.

Five Allied Carrier Strike

Groups Patrol Waters in NATO's Area of Operations

The Italian navy flagship, aircraft carrier ITS Cavour (CVH 550), arrives at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, March 26, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mitchell Banks*

MONS, Belgium – Five Allied aircraft carriers will be operating in the Atlantic Ocean and the North and Mediterranean Seas in November, as part of their regularly scheduled activities, SHAPE Public Affairs said in a Nov. 17 release.

This occurrence presents an opportunity for Allied nations to coordinate credible combat power throughout the Euro-Atlantic Area and showcases NATO cohesion and interoperability.

Participating forces comprise the Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) formed in support of the French Navy Charles De Gaulle, the Italian Navy ITS Cavour, the United Kingdom Royal Navy Queen

Elizabeth and the United States Navy’s George H.W. Bush and Gerald R. Ford.

Although each nation’s forces are operating in support of their own mission objectives, the advanced cooperation shows unity towards the collective defence of the Alliance. Ships and assets from various allies and partners are included in the groups, and the activity is coordinated with the Standing NATO Maritime Groups 1 and 2.

“NATO routinely demonstrates its cohesion, coordinating with multiple international maritime assets at once,” said Commander, NATO Allied Maritime Command Vice Adm. Keith Blount. “This opportunity demonstrates our ironclad commitment to the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic Area and the strength of our collective capability.”

“Five carriers within our operating area presents a further opportunity to consolidate our approach to air defense, cross-domain cooperation and maritime-land integration,” he said.

There is a continuous presence of Allied aircraft carriers around the NATO area of operations, and it is common for multiple CSGs to be deployed simultaneously. The multi-carrier deployment is an opportunity to test the cooperation and practice NATO’s Deter and Defend concept as it leverages a deliberate rhythm of military activity across all geographic areas of the Alliance, as well as across all operational domains and functional areas.

Allied maritime forces and NATO Maritime Groups regularly patrol the waters around Europe to assure Allies of the maritime commitment to collective defense.