

# CNO, Commander of the Romanian Naval Forces Discuss Maritime, Regional Security



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday meets with Commander of the Romanian Naval Forces Rear Adm. Mihai Panait at the Pentagon for an office call Sept. 29. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Amanda Gray*

WASHINGTON – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday met with Commander of the Romanian Naval Forces Rear Adm. Mihai Panait at the Pentagon for an office call on Sept. 29, the CNO's public affairs office said in a release.

The leaders discussed regional stability and maritime security, allied cooperation efforts, as well as modernization and deterrence.

"My discussions with Rear Adm. Panait were very productive and focused on future operations," said Gilday. "The U.S. and

Romania have a shared commitment to promoting safety and stability in the Black Sea, and the Romanian Naval Forces are an active contributor to maritime security operations there, as well as an important partner throughout the region. The U.S. Navy will continue to operate alongside our Romanian allies.”

The U.S. Navy and Romanian Naval Forces regularly operate together. Most recently, both navies participated in the Bulgarian exercise Breeze alongside Allies and partners Albania, Belgium, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Romania hosts U.S. Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System Romania, located aboard Naval Support Facility Deveselu in Deveselu, Romania. USAAMDSRO is under the operational control of the U.S. Navy’s 6th Fleet based in Naples, Italy, and is part of the European Phased Adapted Approach, which protects European NATO Allies and U.S. deployed forces in the region. This land-based missile defense facility is designed to detect, track, engage, and destroy ballistic missiles in flight outside the atmosphere. Its technology is nearly identical to and works in coordination with the systems used on the four forward-deployed Aegis destroyers stationed in Rota, Spain.

Panait attended the U.S.-led 2021 International Seapower Symposium in Newport, Rhode Island, and will see Gilday again in Venice, Italy, next month for the Trans-Regional Seapower Symposium. This was their first official meeting.

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# Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic Established



NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – Marking a significant milestone

event for the waterfront community, the Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic was established during a ceremony onboard Naval Station Mayport, Sept. 23.

The training facility, formerly managed and operated by Surface Combat Systems Training Command Detachment Southeast, became a separate command under the SCSTC domain.

Before Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic was officially established, Cmdr. Carl Brobst was relieved by Lt. Cmdr. Aloysius Elzie as SCSTC Det Southeast's officer in charge during a change of charge. From July 2019, when Brobst assumed duties as OIC, to September 2022, Brobst and his team helped shape the next generation of surface warfighters. The det's annual throughput more than quadrupled and they delivered over 18,840 combat-ready Sailors to the Fleet. Brobst will retire later this year after 30 years of naval service.

Immediately following the change of charge, Cmdr. Dan Reiher assumed command of Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic. Reiher is already well-known in the LCS community. He served aboard USS Sioux City (LCS 11) as executive officer and commanding officer Gold Crew. Most recently, he was the commanding officer of USS Wichita (LCS 13).

"I am truly humbled to become the first commanding officer of LTF LANT and honored to join and lead an outstanding team of professionals in training future LCS warfighters," he said.

The establishment of Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic is part of Surface Combat Systems Training Command's large internal realignment effort that begun in 2021 with the changing of its name, formerly the Center for Surface Combat Systems. The name change and realignment define the command's critical mission of training surface warfighters. SCSTC, with its surface community partners and force development counterparts, provides system and platform specific combat

systems training to a growing surface Navy. Littoral Combat Ship Training Facility Atlantic, with the responsibility of training all LCS Freedom-class ships and their crews, supports the increased demand for LCS training at the waterfront.

Capt. George A. Kessler, Jr., commodore of SCSTC, presided over the ceremony and delivered remarks as the keynote speaker.

“Being here in Mayport, you can see and feel the impact of today’s event for not only SCSTC, but also the waterfront,” Kessler said. “LTF LANT is part of the domain’s overall realignment effort but the significance of LTF LANT is about the mission. A mission that is growing in importance each day. Strategic competition at sea is not an amorphous concept but an everyday reality and it demands that our Sailors have the tactical competence and proficiency needed to execute the mission across the spectrum of operations in today’s challenging environment. Our warfighters must be ready to fight and LTF LANT provides the high-end tactical training needed to ensure warfighting readiness, which leads to security for our country and our allies and maintains the freedom of the seas we so richly enjoy.”

The LTF LANT is located onboard Naval Station Mayport, Fla. The first Freedom variant LCS arrived at Naval Station Mayport in 2016 and the number of LCSs have grown.

LTF LANT facilitates the training concepts of Train-to-Qualify and Train-to-Certify for the LCS 1 USS Freedom ship variant. It provides an integrated command and control environment to support training in both navigation and combat systems mission areas. LTF LANT is comprised of three components which can be used independently or in concert with the others to provide more complex training scenarios. Each section of the trainer replicates the basic layout and design of the LCS command and control, bridge, and propulsion control systems. Using mockups of these areas, which includes video screens reproducing



scenes from a ship's bridge windows, the SCSTC team produces realistic training scenarios.

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## Gonzalez Returns To Norfolk from 9-Month Deployment



The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Gonzalez (DDG 66) returns to Naval Station Norfolk after a regularly scheduled deployment in the U.S. 5th Fleet and U.S. 6th Fleet areas of operations, Sept. 28. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication 2nd Class Nathan T. Beard*

NORFOLK, Va. — The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gonzalez (DDG 66) returned to its homeport of Naval Station Norfolk, Sept. 28, 2022, USS Harry S. Truman Public Affairs said in a release.

Gonzalez deployed Jan. 23 as part of a surge deployment of five destroyers under command, U.S. 2nd Fleet, that included the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), USS Mitscher (DDG 57), USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) and USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) before Gonzalez joined the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) in the Mediterranean Sea as a part of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28.

The ship was dynamically employed by U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets, traveling throughout the regions participating in a multitude of bi-lateral and multi-lateral training opportunities ensuring maritime security and stability.

"We left on this deployment to bolster relationships with key allies and partners as well as defend international interests in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets," said Cmdr. Timothy Battles, Gonzalez's commanding officer. "I am proud of the men and women of this ship and all that they have accomplished since we left home and know they can feel a strong sense of pride for a job well done."

The crew's outstanding efforts complemented the ship's diversity of mission sets and substantial capabilities. "The Sailors aboard USS Gonzalez lead the way in demonstrating resolve and dedication to support the mission and each other," said Cmdr. Kate Stegner, Gonzalez's executive officer. "As an independent deployer, our team met each mission with continued success. I am humbled to be a part of this great crew."

While operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, Gonzalez conducted multiple escort transits through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and conducted counter smuggling operations in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 in the Gulf of Oman. Gonzalez also conducted security patrols in support of the recently established CTF 153 to ensure international maritime security and capacity building efforts in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden.

During their operations in U.S. 6th Fleet, Gonzalez demonstrated cohesion and capability by sailing and operating with Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe ships, as well as those of Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG) 2 and the HSTCSG.

In the Mediterranean, Gonzalez helped pave the way for the NATO-led exercise Neptune Shield 22, conducting dual and tri-carrier operations with the Italian and French navies. The multinational exercise demonstrated NATO's ability to integrate the high-end maritime warfare capabilities of allied aircraft carrier strike groups, amphibious ready groups and marine expeditionary units to support the defense of the alliance. Training exercises and vigilance activities throughout the deployment provided the opportunity to enhance relationships with European Allies and partners.

As the ship finally pulled into homeport, Command Master Chief Lance Connolly, Gonzalez's senior enlisted leader, reflected on the sacrifices made by those onboard and those waiting at the pier.

"They conducted themselves admirably the past months despite the many challenges presented throughout our deployment," said Command Master Chief Connolly. "I could not have been more pleased with the resiliency and warrior spirit of our crew."

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), commanded by Capt. Gavin Duff, serves as the flagship of the HSTCSG; additional elements include the nine squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1, commanded by Capt. Patrick Hourigan; the staff and guided-missile destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 28, commanded by Capt. Blair Guy, which have included: USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Gravelly (DDG 107), USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109).



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# U.S. Navy Expands Maintenance Provider Base in Africa



The Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) sails in the Gulf of Aden, July 26. Hershel "Woody" Williams is rotationally deployed to the U.S. Naval Forces Africa area of operations, employed by U.S. 6th Fleet, to defend U.S., allied and partner interests. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Staff Sgt. Dylan Murakami*

WALVIS BAY, Namibia – Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base ship USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) and Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC) ship repair experts hosted a ship check event attended by commercial maintenance providers during a recent port visit to Walvis Bay, Namibia, Sept. 5, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public

Affairs said Sept. 27.

Ship checks provide opportunities to meet regional maintenance providers in person and allow representatives to visit the ship ahead of potentially bidding on a maintenance contract. During the first-ever ship check for Hershel "Woody" Williams in Namibia, FDRMC representatives led the attendees around the vessel to identify areas and equipment in need of maintenance ahead of an upcoming voyage repair availability.

Following the ship check event, Naval Supply Systems Command Fleet Logistics Center Sigonella (NAVSUP FLC SI) contracting officers and FDRMC ship repair experts and U.S. Transportation Command's Military Sealift Command hosted a virtual industry engagement. This event educated maintenance provider representatives about the U.S. government contract solicitation process, contracting regulations and how to submit competitive solicitations to the government to perform any of the ship's needed maintenance.

"The U.S. Navy cannot operate effectively and execute its mission overseas without the labor and expertise of commercial ship repair vendors," said Capt. Paul Haslam, NAVSUP FLC SI chief of contracts. "Ship checks and virtual industry engagement events like those we conducted aboard HWW serve to strengthen relations with key partners like Namibia and, in general, help pave the way for future maintenance and logistics capability overseas. These events also broaden mutual understanding and improve cooperation between NAVSUP and our mission partners."

Having the maintenance provider tour the ship at the same time as the ship check exposed them to needed work aboard Hershel "Woody" Williams. Similarly, during the virtual industry engagement, they had the opportunity to learn about the U.S. government contract solicitation process, contracting regulations and how to submit competitive solicitations to the government to perform any of the ship's needed maintenance.

“Building relationships with regional maintenance providers is critical to ensure U.S. Navy ships receive quality and on-time maintenance during future availabilities,” said Marie Hahn, NAVSUP FLCSI Ship Repair Division director. “We haven’t done work in Namibia yet; so it was expected that commercial vendors in attendance benefited from the virtual industry engagement.”

Hershel “Woody” Williams is the first U.S. Navy vessel to be assigned to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility whose presence is to promote maritime security through a persistent presence in African waters in close cooperation with African partners.

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## **Navy Accepts Delivery of Future USS Cooperstown**



The future USS Cooperstown. *LOCKHEED MARTIN*

WASHINGTON – The Navy accepted delivery of the future USS Cooperstown (LCS 23) at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin, Sept. 20, PEO Unmanned and Small Combatants Public Affairs said in a release.

The ship is the 12th Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship designed and delivered by the Lockheed Martin-led industry team. Delivery marks the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder to the Navy. Following delivery, the ship will sail away for a commissioning ceremony in New York City before transiting to its homeport in Mayport, Florida.

“Today marks a significant shipbuilding milestone in the life of the future USS Cooperstown, ‘America’s Away Team,’ an exceptional ship and the latest inductee into the Navy’s arsenal conducting operations around the globe.” said Capt. Andy Gold, PMS 501 (Littoral Combat Ships) program manager.

LCS 23 is the second Freedom-variant ship outfitted with the combining gear correction that will allow unrestricted

operations. The correction addresses a class-wide flaw that was identified as the fleet deployed these ships in greater numbers.

The future USS Cooperstown will be the first naval ship to honor the Village of Cooperstown in Otsego County, New York. The village is located at the southern end of the historic Otsego Lake in the central region of the state. Cooperstown, New York, is the home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, which is the source of the ship's motto, "America's Away Team."

Several more Freedom variant ships are under construction at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin. The future USS Marinette (LCS 25) is scheduled for delivery in early 2023. Additional ships in various stages of construction include the future ships USS Nantucket (LCS 27), USS Beloit (LCS 29) and USS Cleveland (LCS 31). LCS 31 will be the final Freedom-variant LCS.

The LCS class is now the second-largest surface ship class in production. The future USS Cooperstown is the fourth LCS delivered in Fiscal Year 2022, following the deliveries of the Freedom-variant USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), Independence-variant USS Canberra (LCS 30), and Independence-variant USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32).

The LCS is a fast, agile, mission-focused platform designed to operate in near-shore and open ocean environments, capable of winning against 21st-century coastal threats such as mines and swarming small craft. The ships are capable of supporting forward presence, maritime security, sea control and deterrence.

"I look forward to seeing Cooperstown step up to the plate with her sister ships in Mayport to bring her slugging capabilities to the fleet." Gold said.



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# USS Hué City Decommissioned After 31 Years of Service



Cmdr. Thad D. Tasso, commanding officer USS Hué City (CG 66), salutes as he arrives for the decommissioning ceremony of the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Hué City (CG 66) after 31 years of naval service. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Darien G. Kenney*

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK – With plank owners, former crew members and veterans of the Battle of Hué in attendance, the crew of USS Hué City (CG 66) decommissioned their ship at a Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, ceremony on Sept. 23, the ship's public affairs office said in a release.

The event comes just nine days after the ship's 31st commissioning anniversary. Hundreds gathered to celebrate the



ship's distinguished history and military service and to honor those who sacrificed in the battle for which the ship is named.

The ceremony's presiding officer and a native of Hue, Vietnam, Rear Adm. Huan Nguyen, Naval Sea Systems Command Deputy Commander for Cyber Engineering, shared his 1968 Tet Offensive experiences and the important place USS Hué City holds in the Navy.

"To me, the Hue City represents the very simple democracy and freedom and fighting spirit of all the heroes who defend and protect her," said Nguyen. "Those values are what continue to inspire me to serve our great nation, to live a life of fidelity, courage and honor. It is the crew, former and present, that I would like to honor and thank."

"BZ to the USS Hue City, to the former and present crew. Thank you for your service and may her fighting spirit live on forever."

Current Hué City Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Thad D. Tasso, spoke of the unbreakable connection between a ship and the Sailors who serve onboard and of the life-long connections made through shared experiences and challenges. His words resonated with the audience as they bade farewell to their ship.

"While the decommissioning of a ship is traditionally a somber affair, it is also an opportunity for us to celebrate our warship's heritage and the impact she has had on our Navy," said Tasso.

Hué City was built at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss., and commissioned there Sept. 14, 1991. The ship is named in commemoration of the Vietnam War battle which was fought in and around the city of Hué during the 1968 Tet

Offensive from Jan. 31 to March 2, 1968. During the battle, three understrength U.S. Marine battalions, consisting of fewer than 2,500 men, attacked and soundly defeated more than 10,000 entrenched enemy troops, liberating the city of Hué and handing the enemy a costly defeat.

The Ticonderoga-class, guided-missile cruiser is the only U.S. Navy warship to be named in commemoration of a Vietnam War battle.

Over its 31 years of service, Hué City has played an important part in the Navy's timeless role of protecting America at sea. The ship and its crew completed several deployments, supported numerous exercises and provided important humanitarian assistance, including off the coast of New York in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

From 2002 to 2017, the ship deployed seven times in support of the Global War on Terror and Operation Enduring Freedom. The ship deployed for the final time in 2017 to support Operation Inherent Resolve.

"For 31 years USS Hué City defended our nation and kept the oceans of the world free," added Tasso.

"Her crew sailed with the full knowledge of the heritage that sailed with them and in striving to remain true to it, built a legacy of success of their own. As she now takes her rightful place in our Navy's history, I can think of no more fitting epitaph for her service than 'she was worthy of the name she bears'."

After decommissioning, the ship is slated to be towed Oct. 31, to the Navy's Inactive Ship's facility in Philadelphia, where it will be in a Logistical Support Asset status.

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# CNO, Commander of Belgian Navy Discuss Increasing Capabilities and Capacity



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday meets with Commander of the Belgian Navy Rear Adm. Jan de Beurme at the Pentagon for an office call, Sept. 23. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication 1st Class Michael Zingaro*

WASHINGTON – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday met with the Commander of the Belgian Navy Rear Adm. Jan de Beurme at the Pentagon for an office call on Sept. 23, the CNO's Public Affairs office said in a release.

The leaders discussed building maritime capabilities and

capacity, as well as deterrence, defense and the need to continue to protect the stability and prosperity of the seas.

“Collectively, our capacity expands when we sail in company with like-minded navies around the world, and we are grateful for the continued partnership and collaboration with Belgium,” said Gilday. “We will continue to strengthen the bonds we share through increased operations, interoperability, and continued cooperation.”

Both heads of navy emphasized the need to develop high-end warfare capabilities, such as advanced mine countermeasures and ballistic-missile defense, while also leveraging enhanced capabilities and technology. The Belgian navy is currently leading a Belgian-Dutch mine countermeasures replacement program, which will supply the Belgian and Royal Netherlands navies with six new minehunter vessels each.

The U.S. Navy and Belgian navy regularly operate together around the world. In July, the Navy participated in the Bulgarian exercise Breeze alongside Allies and partners Albania, Belgium, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Turkey and the United Kingdom. This summer the U.S. and Belgium were two of the 16 NATO Allied and partner nations that participated in exercise Baltic Operations 22, the premier maritime-focused exercise in the Baltic Region.

Beurme attended the U.S.-led 2021 International Seapower Symposium in Newport, Rhode Island, and will see Gilday again in Venice, Italy, next month for the Trans-Regional Seapower Symposium. This was their first official meeting.

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# Cruiser                      USS                      Anzio Decommissioned After 30 Years of service



Sailors and plank owners of the Ticonderoga-class, guided-missile cruiser USS Anzio (CG 68) haul down the pennants, the jack and the ensign during the ship's decommissioning ceremony onboard Naval Station Norfolk, Sept. 22. Anzio was decommissioned after 30 years of service. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Bradley Rickard*

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK – With plank owners, former crew members, and families of the Battle of Anzio veterans looking on, USS Anzio (CG 68) crew decommissioned their ship at a Naval Station Norfolk ceremony Sept. 22, Naval Surface Force Public Affairs said in a release.

Retired Capt. H. Wyman Howard Jr., Anzio's first commanding

officer, fondly remembered how the ship was brought to life three decades ago.

“Four hundred young men with the average age of 20 years old, 66% of whom had never been to sea before, ran onto Anzio and brought her alive,” said Howard during his remarks.

“At the commissioning, I wrote the following letter to Team Anzio: ‘This day marks the most significant milestone in the life of Anzio: she comes alive! ... Whether you fought at the Anzio beachhead, welded a piece of her steel, supervised her construction, or gave your love and support to us during 20 months of hard work, you are a valued member of Team Anzio. Thank you for all the hours, hard work, and sacrifices you made to make this day a reality.’”

The event comes just months after the ship’s 30th commissioning anniversary. Hundreds gathered to celebrate the ship’s distinguished history and military service.

Anzio was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss., and commissioned in Norfolk, May 2, 1992.

It is the second ship to bear the name Anzio and honors the Allied Forces beachhead invasion at Anzio and Nettuno, Italy, during World War II. The strategic importance of the Battle of Anzio to the overall Allied effort in Europe, however, is often underestimated. The two German corps engaged on the Anzio front were originally destined for Normandy. The success of the Allied landings on the beaches in France in June 1944 were due largely to the tenacity of the Allied forces at Anzio.

The Ticonderoga-class, guided-missile cruiser deployed for the first time Oct. 20, 1994, as part of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Battle Group. During that deployment the crew participated in operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean, Arabian Gulf, Adriatic Sea and Black Sea. It would be the first of many Anzio deployments.



Over the years, the Anzio team supported Operation Iraqi Freedom, firing more than a dozen Tomahawk missiles while on station and served as the flagship for Combined Task Force 151 supporting anti-piracy efforts off the horn of Africa. The crew also picked up 10 U.S. Navy Sailors for transport and medical evaluations after being held in Iranian custody having been captured after their two naval boats unintentionally entered Iranian waters.

After decommissioning, the ship is slated to be towed in November to the Navy's Inactive Ship's facility in Philadelphia, Pa., where it will be in a Logistical Support Asset status.

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## **Admiral: Safety, Retention, and Efficiency Are Navy's Top Priorities for Shipyard Workers**



Rear Adm. Scott Brown visited Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) in May to review shipyard operations in his new role as the deputy commander for industrial operations, Naval Sea Systems Command. *U.S. NAVY / Marc Ayalin*

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Retaining shipyard workers and increasing their efficiency are the top priorities – aside from ensuring their safety – for the Navy’s deputy commander of industrial operations, he said at an American Society of Naval Engineers Conference in Virginia Beach on Sept. 20.

Rear Adm. Scott Brown, deputy commander of logistics, maintenance and industrial operations at Naval Sea Systems Command, said the Navy is doing all it can to maximize its workforce’s capabilities while also growing it to meet maintenance challenges.

The Navy has been battling a submarine maintenance backlog for years, causing the service to even resort to sending some attack submarines to private yards and hiring more personnel. A Congressional Budget Office report predicted the Navy is

likely to see labor supply shortages for the next few decades.

Brown said his top three priorities were safety, production capacity, and throughput and efficiency.

On the subject of safety, he stated there were 37,000 shipyard workers and their safety remains his top priority. After that, he is focused on production capacity as retention proves difficult in a hot economy where there is a high demand for workers. His office is trying to deal with that by focusing on retention so there are fewer gaps the Navy must fill through hiring, he said.

The final priority is throughput in efficiency, as Brown stated he wanted to make the workforce they have now as productive as they can possibly be.

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## **U.S. , Israel Complete Unmanned Exercise in Gulf of Aqaba**



Vessels from the Israeli Navy and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command operate in the Gulf of Aqaba with two unmanned surface vessels, a Devil Ray T-38, top, and Saildrone Explorer, bottom, during exercise Digital Shield, Sept. 21. *U.S. NAVY MANAMA*, Bahrain – Forces from Israel and the U.S. completed a four-day exercise in the Gulf of Aqaba on Sept. 22, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said.

The exercise, called Digital Shield, was a bilateral training event between U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Israeli naval forces that focused on enhancing maritime awareness using unmanned systems and artificial intelligence in support of vessel boarding operations.

U.S. participants included members of NAVCENT's unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force, Task Force 59, and the U.S. Coast Guard. A Devil Ray T-38 and Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel also participated.

"Integrating unmanned systems with our partners advances our integration efforts," said Lt. Cmdr. William Ricketts from Task Force 59. "Ultimately, we are strengthening ties and innovating new capabilities with regional partners to enhance maritime security."

NAVCENT established Task Force 59 in September 2021 to integrate new unmanned systems and artificial intelligence into U.S. naval operations across the Middle East. Since its launch, the task force has operated a suite of new unmanned systems based at operational hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan.

The task force partners with industry and international forces for operational evaluation and employment. The Middle East region's unique geography, climate and strategic importance offer an ideal environment for unmanned innovation.

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.