USS Comstock returns to San Diego after Indo-Pacific deployment

USS Comstock (LSD 45) returns to homeport at Naval Base San Diego. (MC1 Kelby Sanders)
Oct. 9, 2024

SAN DIEGO – The Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Comstock (LSD 45) returned to homeport in San Diego, following a nearly four-month deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, Oct. 8.

Along with its more than 400 Sailors, Comstock participated in multiple exercises and operations, displaying interoperability and the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

“The Sailors aboard Comstock performed their duty in an exemplary manner to support tasking in U.S. 7th Fleet,” said

Cmdr. Byron Stocks, commanding officer of Comstock. “The mission execution afforded the opportunity to demonstrate joint force capability.”

With a focus on joint operations, Comstock and its embarked units supported the America Amphibious Ready Group and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) during advanced integrated training and MEU certification. Comstock also successfully integrated with motorized weapons company of 31st MEU and Combat Logistics Battalion 31.

During the deployment, Comstock embarked two landing crafts utility from Naval Beach Group 7 to rehearse and demonstrate capability of the amphibious Navy’s shore connectors.

Comstock also participated in Exercise Ssang Yong 24. During the decisive action phase of Ssang Yong, Republic of Korea and U.S. combined and joint forces conducted large-scale maneuvers from sea and air to showcase the overwhelming power of the alliance and its capability to carry out combined amphibious operations.

Since 2012, the ROK and U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have regularly conducted Ssang Yong to enhance defensive posture on the Korean Peninsula while improving naval and amphibious capabilities.

After Ssang Yong, Comstock transited home to San Diego following a nearly four-month deployment.

When not at sea, Comstock Sailors had the opportunity to enjoy foreign cultures during port visits to Guam, Japan, and Republic of Korea.

USS Comstock is homeported at Naval Base San Diego and assigned to Amphibious Squadron 1.

Operational Commitments Delay VQ-1's Sundown Homecoming Ceremony

EAST CHINA SEA (Sept. 24, 2020) An EP-3E Airborne Reconnaissance Integrated Electronic System (ARIES) II, assigned to the "World Watchers" of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1 (VQ-1), transits over the East China Sea. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Andrew Langholf)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

Oct. 8, 2024

ARINGTON, Va. — A planned homecoming ceremony for two U.S. Navy EP-3E electronic reconnaissance aircraft and their crews today has been postponed because of the Navy's current operational commitments.

According to the Facebook account of Fleet Air Reconnaissance

Squadron One (VQ-1), the ceremony was to welcome home the crews from the final operational deployments of VQ-1 and the EP-3E. The two crews were scheduled to return to the squadron's home base of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington.

A Navy directive issued July 18, 2023, scheduled VQ-1's de-activation for March 31, 2025, but that the squadron was to cease operations by Sept. 30, 2024. Apparently, operational commitments initially delayed the cessation to Oct. 8, 2024, and now have required continued operations to an undetermined date. The operational commitments likely are related to the hostilities in the Middle East.

According to an Oct. 8 statement to Seapower from the Navy's maritime patrol reconnaissance program office, the last EP-3Es may not be retired until March 2025.

"Due to OPSEC [operations security] we cannot offer the number of aircraft, but there are sufficient aircraft to support the mission through the March 2025 date above," the statement said.

The EP-3Es that have been retired and those that will be retired in the future will be delivered to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (309th AMARG) at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, for storage.

The Lockheed-built EP-3Es are being replaced by the Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles. The Tritons have been operating from Guam and from NAS Sigonella, Sicily, and on Oct. 1, a third Triton site was established in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of operations. The Navy directive also said that the foreign signals intelligence capability executed by EP-3Es would be assumed by a VUP [special projects patrol squadron].

In addition to the EP-3Es, the Navy operates a handful of P-3C, NP-3C, and NP-3D Orion aircraft flown by Air Test and

Evaluation Squadron 30 (VX-30) at NAS Point Mugu, California, and by Scientific Development Squadron One (VXS-1) at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland.

HII Launches Amphibious Transport Dock Harrisburg (LPD 30)

HII’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division successfully launched the first LPD Flight II, San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship Harrisburg (LPD 30) on Saturday, October 5, 2024. (HII)

From HII, Oct. 8, 2024

PASCAGOULA, Miss., Oct. 08, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII's (NYSE:HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division successfully launched on Saturday the first LPD Flight II, *San Antonio-class* amphibious transport dock ship *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), marking one of the first major milestones in the ship's journey towards operational readiness.

The Ingalls team translated *Harrisburg* from land to the company's floating dry dock using translation railcars to support the ship's movement across the pier. While in the dry dock, the Ingalls team completed final prep work needed for launch.

"We view this launch as a significant step toward fielding capability to our U.S. Navy and Marine Corps partners, and a reminder of the importance of supporting national security," said Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson. "As shipbuilders, we are dedicated to this mission."

Photos accompanying this release are available at: https://hii.com/newsroom/

The launch of LPD 30 follows the recent announcement of the amphibious multi-ship procurement contract for the construction of three *San Antonio*-class (LPD 17) amphibious ships [LPD 33-35] and a contract modification for the next *America*-class (LHA 6) large-deck amphibious ship [LHA 10].

Ingalls currently has two Flight II LPDs under construction including *Harrisburg* (LPD 30) and *Pittsburgh* (LPD 31). Pre-construction activities are currently underway for the construction of *Philadelphia* (LPD 32), the 16th ship in the *San Antonio-class.*

USS Daniel Inouye Returns from Maiden Deployment

By MCSN Aaron Haro Gonzalez, Oct.4, 2024

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Daniel Inouye (DDG 118) returned to its homeport of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam after completing a historic maiden deployment, Oct. 4.

While in the U.S. 5th and 7th fleet areas of operation as part of the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group (TRCSG), Daniel Inouye promoted regional stability and security, deterred aggression, and protected the free flow of commerce throughout its nine-month deployment.

“When you look at the history of Daniel Inouye, he had to

fight to prove that he was an American through joining the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. On this deployment, we as the Sailors of USS Daniel Inouye, carried his name into the Pacific and then into the 5th Fleet area of operation for the very first time, honoring his legacy," said Cmdr. Kevin Dore, commanding officer of Daniel Inouye. "I'm extremely proud of the readiness and responsiveness our crew displayed throughout deployment. We were always ready to go, as evidenced by how quickly we manned our RHIB (rigid-hull inflatable boat) to come to the aid of two distressed Iranian mariners lost at sea."

TRCSG rescued the two civilian Iranian mariners in international waters, Aug. 23, 2024. A RHIB from Daniel Inouye, along with a search and rescue helicopter from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 8, successfully recovered the mariners from the water and took them to the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) for medical care.

"Every single day this crew goes about their daily routines, treating every drill like it's real life. Every time a real situation comes up, everyone is cool, calm and collected under pressure," said Cmdr. Ryan Kelly, executive officer of Daniel Inouye. "That is 'going for broke,' when you give everything you have to everything you do in training. I'm honored to be part of a crew that gives their all every single day like the team on this ship."

"Go For Broke" was the motto of the Army's storied 442nd Regimental Combat Team and is now carried on by the crew of Daniel Inouye, featured prominently on the ship's crest.

When not at sea, Daniel Inouye Sailors had the opportunity to enjoy foreign cultures during port visits to the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Thailand.

"Being a plankowner, I've been here since commissioning. One

thing that stands out about this ship and this crew is its resiliency," said Command Master Chief Simeon Yeboah, Daniel Inouye's senior enlisted leader. "I think the crew learns through history and what we teach about the man who represents this ship. I see Sailors who are proud of what they mean to the team and how they come together to make this ship work."

The ship is named after Honolulu native Daniel Inouye, a decorated World War II veteran who was elected as one of Hawaii's first representatives in the U.S. Congress. In 1962, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served until his death in 2012, the second-longest serving senator in U.S. history. He served as President pro tempore of the Senate in his final years, which made him the highest-ranking Asian American politician in U.S history.

After graduating high school in 1942, Inouye, tried to enlist in the Army but Japanese-Americans were not allowed to join following the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943 activated the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up exclusively of Japanese-American enlisted men but commanded almost entirely by Caucasian officers. In October 1944, Inouye received a battlefield commission to second lieutenant for his actions rescuing 211 U.S. Army Soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment from German forces. During the battle, enemy fire hit Inouye in the chest, but a silver dollar in the chest pocket deflected the bullet, saving his life. In April 1945, Inouye lost his right arm in combat and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery. In the 1990s, Congress and the military reviewed the cases of WWII soldiers who may have been denied the nation's highest honor due to racism. In 2000, Inouye and 19 other Japanese-American veterans of the 442nd were awarded the Medal of Honor. In 2013, he was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, becoming the first – and to date, only – senator to receive both the Medal of Freedom and Medal of Honor.

The TRCSG is commanded by Carrier Strike Group Nine (CSG 9) and composed of the flagship Theodore Roosevelt, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 11, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Erie (CG 70) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS John S. McCain (DDG 56), USS Halsey (DDG 97), Daniel Inouye, and USS Russell (DDG 59) of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 23.

An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet leads naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to flawlessly execute our Navy's role across the full spectrum of military operations—from combat operations 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.

HII Hosts Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Newport News Shipbuilding

From HII

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., Oct. 04, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII (NYSE: HII) hosted Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the company's Newport News Shipbuilding division Thursday.

"I firmly believe that honing our warfighting skills has primacy in all we do," Brown said. "It was great to see the hard work of the Navy's shipbuilding team alongside our defense industry partners ensuring we maintain our edge through the construction of the next *Ford*-class carrier and *Columbia*-class submarine. These efforts provide our military with unmatched capabilities, reinforcing our ability to operate effectively across any mission, in any domain, and in any region of the world."

While at NNS, Brown visited shipbuilders and sailors on *John F. Kennedy* (CVN 79), saw construction progress on *Virginia*- and *Columbia*– class submarine modules, and met with shipyard leadership. Adm. William Houston, director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, and Vice Adm. Jim Downey, commander, Naval Sea Systems Command, accompanied the

chairman.

“Our shipbuilders’ commitment to supporting the Department of Defense is unwavering, and we are grateful General Brown invested time to see that for himself,” NNS President Jennifer Boykin said. “The nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines we build and maintain are vital to our national security, and we are proud to deliver these critical capabilities to those who defend our freedoms.”

Photos accompanying this release are available at: https://hii.com/news/hii-hosts-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-at-newport-news-shipbuilding/.

NNS is the nation’s sole designer, builder and refueler of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and one of only two shipyards capable of designing and building nuclear-powered submarines.

GE Vernova Secures Contract for U.S. Navy’s Advanced Propulsion Load System Testing

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. October 3, 2024 – GE Vernova Inc. (NYSE: GEV) today announced that its Power Conversion business has secured a contract to develop and deliver a Propulsion Load System (PLS) for the U.S. Navy's land-based testing facilities to support a new generation of advanced naval surface vessels. These systems are planned to be used to rigorously test the performance and reliability of shipboard propulsion systems in a controlled, land-based environment before deployment at sea.

Contract Overview

The scope of the contract, which was booked in the second quarter of 2024, includes the design, manufacturing, delivery, and installation of two independent PLS units at a U.S. Navy facility over a three-year period. The program and the facility, managed by the Naval Surface Warfare Center Philadelphia Division (NSWCPD), will serve as the primary site for testing and qualification of propulsion systems for a new generation of advanced naval vessels, such as the FFG-62 and DDG(X). By simulating real-world shipboard conditions, the PLS is designed to help reduce technical risks, streamline

development timelines, and train future crews, providing a strategic advantage to the Navy.

The system is expected to incorporate a full suite of power conversion technologies, including propulsion load electric motors, E-houses, power electronic motor drives, switchboards, motor control centers, load banks, transformers, and related essential infrastructure.

“GE Vernova is proud to contribute to the U.S. Navy’s future naval capabilities by delivering innovative testing solutions that help lower the technology risk and prepare crews for the next generation of surface vessels,” said Ed Torres, Business Line Leader of GE Vernova’s Power Conversion Business. “This contract reflects our commitment to advancing naval technology through reliable, efficient propulsion load management systems.”

Technological Significance:

The contract further solidifies GE Vernova’s leadership in providing more energy-efficient electric propulsion technologies for complex naval applications. With over 40 U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard vessel references, decades of experience with land-based test facilities, and successful integration of similar systems in programs such as the Columbia Class and Zumwalt Class, GE Vernova continues to demonstrate its expertise in this field.

Program Background

The award comes from the US Navy’s Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships under the program offices PMS 515 (frigates) and PMS 460 (DDG(X) program), with technical and programmatic ownership by the NSWC. The agreement, administered through the Maritime Sustainment Technology and Innovation Consortium (MSTIC) and managed by Advanced Technology International (ATI) is the largest agreement awarded to date on the MSTIC Other Transaction Authority (OTA).

This is GE Vernova Power Conversion's first Other Transaction Authority (OTA) award. OTAs provide the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and other government agencies with the flexibility needed to carry out innovation, prototype, research, and production programs by adapting and incorporating business practices that align with commercial industry standards. They promote flexible, faster, and more cost-effective product design and execution.

US Navy Awards Bollinger Shipyards Contract to Build 7th Berthing Barge

LOCKPORT, La., – (October 3, 2024) – Bollinger Shipyards ("Bollinger") announced today that it has been awarded a contract to build the U.S. Navy's seventh Auxiliary Personnel Lighter–Small (APL 73) Class berthing and messing barge. The contract award is for a fixed-price option for the detail design and construction of the vessel.

"We're honored to be entrusted by the U.S. Navy to continue building these critical vessels that improve the quality of life for our sailors," said Ben Bordelon, President and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. "We take great pride in every single vessel we build and deliver to the U.S. Navy. This contract reflects the relentless work ethic of our skilled workforce and their commitment to upholding the highest levels of quality and craftsmanship that our company was founded on and, 78-years later, remains dedicated to."

Bollinger delivered APL 70 and 71–to the U.S. Navy in 2022 and 2023, respectively, and is currently building APL 72. APLs

are used by the Navy to house crewmembers when ships are in port for availabilities and Inter-Deployment Training Cycles. Notably, Bollinger tailors the barge's mobility requirement into the design, ensuring they can be towed to new bases or shipyards to support changing fleet requirements. Such mobility offers additional capabilities to serve humanitarian missions and other temporary assignments.

APLs are 269 feet long, 69 feet wide and have a draft of 7 feet. Each vessel is equipped with offices, classrooms, washrooms, laundry facilities, medical treatment areas, a barber shop and fitness center. With mess seating for 224 enlisted personnel and 28 officers, each meal is served via five 20-minute shifts to allow food service for 1,130 personnel (three meals per day). The vessels are fitted with mixed-gender berthing spaces for 74 officers and 537 enlisted personnel, for a total of 611 people.

SECNAV Del Toro Advances Maritime Statecraft, Strengthens Maritime Dominance during Visit to Raytheon

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Oct.4, 2024

TUSCON, AZ (October 4, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited Raytheon Technologies (RTX) to receive updates and provide feedback on advanced naval capabilities and programs today. Discussions with Raytheon leadership

addressed production timelines, industrial base health, and future technology development.

Secretary Del Toro met with Barbara Borgonovi, President of Naval Power at Raytheon, Gina Cunningham, Vice President for Naval Missile Systems, and Gerard Hueber, Vice President of Requirements and Capabilities.

During discussions, the Secretary emphasized the importance of continued investment in the defense industrial base to deliver cutting-edge solutions that strengthen maritime dominance amidst ongoing operations and in strategic competition. He pointed to proven success of U.S. Navy weapons systems aboard carrier strike groups and guided-missile destroyers to defeat Houthi and Iranian attacks in the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea. He also noted competitors were watching those engagements closely and taking note of the Navy's success.

"No one should doubt our Navy and Marine Corps team's ability to deploy and operate the world's most complex naval weapons systems in self-defense and in defense of our allies and partners," said Del Toro. "That is exactly why we invest so much to develop our maritime threats, but also to deter our strategic competitors from testing our resolve. That is also why this important visit is timely before our Navy demonstrates the ability to rearm at sea for the first time next week. "

The Secretary received updates on several critical programs including, the Standard Missile family, the AN/SPY-6 radar, the Tomahawk missile system and Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (cUAS) capabilities. The Secretary also received updates on accelerating SM-6 Block IA production, including investments to increase production capacity, secure more sources for critical components, and modernize manufacturing processes. Discussions also addressed the evolving threat of unmanned aircraft systems and the company's ongoing efforts to develop and deploy effective countermeasures.

This visit reinforced the importance of a robust and resilient defense industrial base. The Secretary expressed confidence in Raytheon’s commitment to delivering innovative and reliable solutions that support the Department of the Navy’s mission.

MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Navy Aircraft System Stands Up a Third Orbit

The Navy’s MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system (UAS), operated by Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, has established a third orbit in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations (AOR), Oct. 1.

By Commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group Public Affairs, Oct. 3, 2024

U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations – The Navy's MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system (UAS), operated by Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, has established a third orbit in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations (AOR), Oct. 1.

"Enabled by the Navy's Get Real, Get Better charge to think and act differently, and executed by the women and men of 'Big Red', the MQ-4C has achieved the unprecedented stand-up of three orbits, vastly increasing the maritime domain awareness for the Joint Force. Additionally, and through capitalizing on U.S. 10th Fleet's distributed networks, we are rapidly closing the sensor to shooter gap," Capt. Ronald Rumfelt, commanding officer VUP-19 said.

Triton first deployed to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam as an Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in August 2023 soon followed by a second detachment flying from Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Italy in April 2024. With the stand-up of a third orbit in U.S. Central Command, VUP-19, or "Big Red," achieved the unprecedented milestone of remotely operating simultaneously in three AORs from its home base at NAS Jacksonville, Florida.

More impressive is that the squadron, supported by Persistent Maritime Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program Office (PMA-262) at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, achieved this milestone in just over one year from IOC.

The MQ-4C Triton provides a persistent maritime ISR capability using multiple sensors. Along with P-8A Poseidon manned aircraft and TacMobile ground support system, the MQ-4C Triton is integral to the Navy's Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Force (MPRF) Family of Systems (FoS). The MQ-4C is the numerical replacement for the retiring EP-3 Aries II, Navy's

long standing manned signals intelligence platform.

The recently released CNO Navigation Plan 2024, Navy's strategic guidance from the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations, specifically calls out the operationalization of robotic and autonomous systems. CNO Adm. Lisa Franchetti's Project 33 sets priorities for accelerated implementation and seeks to move proven autonomous systems into the hands of the warfighters. Embodying this warfighting approach, that is exactly what VUP-19 is doing.

Currently, Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Group / Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Group Pacific (CPRG/CPRG-PAC) provides oversight to more than 7,000 men and women on both coasts operating the U.S. Navy's maritime patrol aircraft.

The Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Force is administratively organized into two CONUS Patrol and Reconnaissance Wings at NAS Jacksonville, Florida and NAS Whidbey Island, Washington: including 14 Patrol and Reconnaissance squadrons, one Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) and over 45 subordinate commands. The forward-deployed MPRF consists of three Patrol and Reconnaissance Wings in Manama, Bahrain (CTF-57); Sigonella, Sicily (CTF-67) and Atsugi, Japan (CTF-72). The MPRF is the Navy's premiere provider for airborne anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), and maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

2024 Hybrid Fleet Campaign

Event Tests Technology for Future Operations

Key West, FL (September 23, 2024) Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Atlantic participated in U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's annual Hybrid Fleet Campaign (HFC) event in Key West Harbor from Sept. 19 to 26. During the experiment that involved two dozen unmanned air/surface/underwater vehicles, NIWC Atlantic assessed how emerging communications capabilities integrated with unmanned systems both ashore and aboard the expeditionary fast transport USNS Burlington (T-EPF-10). (U.S. Navy photo by Joe Bullinger)

By U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs

Sept. 27, 2024

KEY WEST, Fla. – U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet demonstrated unmanned air, surface and undersea capabilities from the expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Burlington during the command's annual Hybrid Fleet Campaign

Event in Key West from Sept. 19-26, 2024.

The event focused on evaluating attritable unmanned kill chains, assuring command and control, and leveraging non-traditional small business innovations. It served as both a proving ground for emerging technologies and an opportunity for partner nations and industry leaders to witness capabilities that could support the hybrid fleet.
“We are excited about again collaborating with the Office of Naval Research, other Navy commands, and our academic and industry partners to conduct multiple experiments in the Key West Operating Area,” said Dr. Chris Heagney, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) Fleet/Force Advisor, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “We consider our Fleet as the test bed for experimentation and innovation, and the Fleet experiments we will conduct will hopefully lead to future victories on the battlefield.”

U.S. 4th Fleet is operationalizing robotic autonomous systems with many partners including Navy Small Business Innovation Research Experimentation Cell and Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic in support of Chief of Naval Operations objectives outlined in Project 33 of the 2024 Navigation Plan.

Experiments were conducted using unmanned aircraft systems, unmanned aerial vehicles and unmanned underwater vehicles to focus on Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting, Assured Command and Control, and Small Business Innovative Research. A key tenant of operationalizing these systems is to push technologies to their limits, embrace risk, and ensure lessons learned.

“These experiments are not about reaching 100% of our objectives,” said Cmdr. David Edwards, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet N9 Technology and Innovation Director. “The goal of the campaign is to push these

technologies to their limits and learn from the exercises no matter the outcome.”

The campaign aimed to combine manned and unmanned systems to allow U.S. 4th Fleet to deploy and integrate unmanned systems and AI tools to bolster maritime domain awareness, counter narcotics and counter illegal unreported and unregulated fishing efforts throughout the area of operations while learning how other fleets across the world could use robotic systems to support their objectives.

In addition to demonstrating unmanned capabilities for partner nations in attendance like Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, STEM subject matter experts from various Department of the Navy laboratories participated in the Scientists-to-Sea program during the event as observers aboard USNS Burlington in the Atlantic Ocean.

While weather did impact the end of the event, crews demonstrated remarkable flexibility in adapting to schedule changes. Their efforts allowed for all predetermined objectives to be met, despite the challenges.

“Overall, it was a great event that wouldn’t have been possible without support from the 37 participating DoD commands, our 31 industry partners, 4 universities, and our NAS Key West hosts,” said Cmdr. Jason Queen, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet N9 Technology and Innovation Deputy Director. “We had 4 vessels, including Burlington, showcasing cutting-edge technologies that will inform and help shape the Hybrid Fleet of the future. This collaborative effort truly exemplifies the power of partnership in advancing naval capabilities.”

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet provides the Navy a permissive theater to operate unmanned systems, develop tactics, techniques, and procedures against near-peer

competitors, refine manned-unmanned command and control infrastructure, and inform the Navy’s hybrid fleet of the 2030’s.