

LPD USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. Commissioned



Navy Junior Sea Cadets and Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets make an arrival line for USS Richard M. McCool Jr. Commissioning Ceremony at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola, Florida Sept. 7, 2024. (DoD photo by EJ Hersom)

From Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA, Fla. (September 7, 2024) – The San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. (LPD 29) commissioned aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, September 7.

Welcomed throughout the week, the crew, joined by the ship's sponsor, Shana McCool, and McCool's great-grandchildren, attended community events supported by local businesses,

flyovers by the Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration squadron, a visit by the Pensacola Blue Wahoos, and ceremony host, Naval Air Station Pensacola. Participating in the ceremony were Marine Aviation Training Support Groups Two-One and Two-Three, Navy Training Wing Ten (VT-10) Wildcats, Navy Band Southeast, McGuire's Pipe and Drum Band, and 350 Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and Navy League Sea Cadets from Alabama, Arkansas, and Pensacola.

During the ceremony guest speaker, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, honored the ship's namesake as they brought the ship to life, beginning its commissioned service. "Captain McCool's leadership in the face of grave danger and his acts of heroism to save the crew and the ship our nation entrusted to him are indeed an example for all throughout."

"I am proud that the Department of the Navy is pursuing the award of the Amphibious Multi-Ship Procurement Contract for a total of three San Antonio Class amphibious ships—just like USS Richard M. McCool Jr.—along with an America Class amphibious assault ship," Del Toro continued. "I am proud to see these Sailors and Marines bring this incredible warship to life in service to our nation, much like this ship's courageous namesake."

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti also reflected on the importance of the Navy-Marine Corps team. "The LPD plays an essential role on our Blue-Green team as the workhorse of our Amphibious Fleet, and soon the USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. will set sail and begin embarking, transporting, and landing elements of our Navy-Marine Corps team for a variety of expeditionary warfare training and missions," said Franchetti. "The commissioning of this ship puts more players on the field in America's Warfighting Navy—players the Navy needs to promote our Nation's prosperity and security, deter aggression, and provide options to our Nation's leaders. We need more of these players—platforms that are ready with the right capabilities, weapons, and sustainment to ensure we are

fully prepared to fight and win our Nation's wars in this decade and beyond."

"LPD 29 represents a shift in what an amphibious warship is," said Gen. C.J. Mahoney, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. "With the latest in integrated SPY-6 (air and missile defense radar system) and Next Generation Surface Search Technology, she enables reconnaissance and counter reconnaissance on the forward edge of the battlespace – making sense and decision space for the Fleet and Joint Force Commanders."

Emphasizing the critical role of the integrated Navy-Marine Corps team in the event that deterrence fails, Gen. Mahoney concluded, "If the Marine Corps is a bullet to be fired by the Navy, the USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. – with the very crew you see here today – will pull the trigger."

Commanding Officer Capt. Jeff Baker thanked family, friends, the commissioning committee, those who were not able to be present, the communities of Pascagoula and Pensacola, and Gulf Coast shipbuilders – electricians, machinists, pipe fitters, painters, riggers, welders, and more; everyone who helped to bring this ship to life

Echoing McCool's words when receiving the Medal of Honor "Fight as a unit, not as an individual", Baker talked about the importance of the crew. "I hope that we've made him proud. I hope that we have lived up to and will continue to honor his legacy. The remarkable warship moored behind me, is ready for pictures, but its full of potential energy. It takes 330 officers, chief petty officers, and enlisted crew to sail her and make our warship ready for tasking. Manning these rails are the finest men and women this country has to offer. I couldn't be prouder of them. The ship needs them all. I need them all. The Navy and our country need them all. Please thank them. They've got the watch."

“LPD 29, Richard M. McCool, when deployed comes equipped with the most advanced weapons system ever produced. The weapons system with unlimited reach, lethality, and combat effectiveness. The only system known to mankind that cannot be defeated by any adversary anywhere in the world. The weapons system of the United States Marines Corps.”

LPD 29 is the 13th San Antonio-class LPD commissioned in the United States Navy, and the first U.S. Navy ship to bear this namesake.

The naming of LPD 29 honors U.S. Navy Capt. Richard M. McCool, Jr., Ret. who received the Medal of Honor in 1945 for the heroism he displayed after his ship, USS LSC 122, was attacked by kamikaze aircraft in the Battle of Okinawa. Despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he led efforts to battle a blazing fire on his ship and rescue injured Sailors.

McCool was a leader whose life and legacy revolved around service. In addition to USS LSC 122, he commanded the USS LSC 44 and served on the USS McKean (DD-784), USS Frank Knox (DD-742), and USS Leyte (CV-32), and at the University of Oklahoma, and Eighth Naval District, New Orleans, Louisiana. Attending Boston University in Massachusetts, he was redesignated as a public information officer with assignments as the deputy commander at the Armed Forces Information School at Fort Slocum, New York; and to Commander, Naval Base, Long Beach, California; Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C.; Commander, South Eastern Asia Treaty Organization, Bangkok, Thailand; Ninth Naval District at Great Lakes, Illinois; Commander, First Fleet; and Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, and Commander, Seventh Fleet, Japan. Retiring as a captain in 1974 after 35 years of active duty, he continued serving his community through engagement in local politics in the Bremerton, Washington, area. McCool died in March 2008 and

is buried at Naval Academy Cemetery in Annapolis, Maryland.

San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships are warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions. They provide the Navy and Marine Corps with modern, sea-based platforms that are networked, survivable, and built to operate in the 21st century, with the MV-22 Osprey, the upgraded Amphibious Assault Vehicle, and future means by which Marines are delivered ashore.

SECNAV Del Toro Attends USNS Lansing Keel Laying at Austal Shipyard



Artist rendering of the future USNS Lansing (EPF 16). (Austal USA)

From SECNAV Public Affairs, 6 September 2024

MOBILE, Ala. (Sept. 6, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro attended the keel laying ceremony for USNS Lansing (EPF 16) alongside ship sponsor Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in Mobile, Alabama, Sept. 6, 2024.

The Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) shipbuilding program provides high speed, shallow draft transportation capability to support the intra-theater maneuver of personnel, supplies and equipment for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Army.

“Our EPFs are force multipliers for our combat logistics fleet,” said Secretary Del Toro. “They allow for quicker responses to crises, strengthen our ability to conduct humanitarian and disaster relief operations, and provide logistical support for special forces missions.”

Lansing will be manned by dedicated crews, comprised of both civilian mariners from the Military Sealift Command and embarked military personnel, whose expertise and teamwork will ensure the ship operates at peak efficiency, delivering critical resources and services exactly when and where they’re needed.

The keel laying represents the success and importance of our Maritime Statecraft initiative, which encompasses a national, whole-of-government effort to restore the comprehensive maritime power of our nation.

“Michigan has a world-class skilled workforce and is a leader in developing the techno-industrial workforce we need to build and assemble the ships, munitions, parts, and pieces our Navy, Marine Corps, and indeed our nation need to promote peace around the world,” said Del Toro. “Austal, building this ship,

represents another key line of effort under our new, national approach to Maritime Statecraft—a foreign shipbuilder establishing a U.S. subsidiary, investing in America, and partnering with us to build American ships.”

USNS Lansing is the first ship named in honor of Michigan’s capital city, Lansing. A previous USS Lansing (DE 388) was named for Aviation Machinist Mate First Class William Henry Lansing and decommissioned in 1965.

Bridging the gap between low-speed sealift and high-speed airlift, EPFs transport personnel, equipment and supplies over operational distances with access to littoral offload points including austere, minor and degraded ports in support of the Global War on Terrorism/Theater Security Cooperation Program, Intra-theater Operational/Littoral Maneuver and Sustainment and Seabasing. EPFs enable the rapid projection, agile maneuver and sustainment of modular, tailored forces in response to a wide range of military and civilian contingencies such as Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

Secretary Del Toro made the announcement alongside Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Mayor Andy Schor of Lansing, Michigan, July 22, in addition to announcing the Michigan Maritime Manufacturing (M-3) initiative.

Austal USA, located in Mobile, Alabama, was realized in 1999 for the purpose of reaching the ever increasing commercial and defense aluminum vessel market in the United States. Our shipbuilding facility occupies 164 acres on the eastern shore of the Mobile River and is strategically positioned at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico.

Austal USA Launches 15th EPF, USNS Point Loma



MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA launched USNS Point Loma (EPF 15) at the company's state-of-the-art ship building facility in Mobile, Ala. today. The U.S. Navy's 15th Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF), christened in the beginning of August, is now docked pier side for final outfitting and system activation in preparation for sea trials later this year.

During the launch process, self-propelled modular transporters (SPMT) lifted the ship almost three feet and moved it approximately 400 feet onto a deck barge moored adjacent to the final assembly bay. The barge moved the ship downriver to

Austal USA's West Campus repair yard where the ship was placed in a floating dry dock. The EPF was submerged in the dry dock enabling it to float for the first time, and it was returned back upriver to Austal USA's new construction facility.

"The continued success of this launch process is a testament to the value of teamwork and applying lessons-learned to everything we do," stated Austal USA Vice President of New Construction Programs, Dave Growden. "Our test and activation, crane and rigging, and safety teams work methodically alongside our Navy partners and key vendors such as Berard Transportation and E.N. Bisso & Son tug services. These partnerships allow us to continually examine our process, identify opportunities for improvement, and more effectively achieve these major ship milestones."

Production efforts on EPF 15 will shift to final outfitting and system activation to support USNS Point Loma getting underway for sea trials.

Navy Honors Capt. Thomas G. Kelley at Keel Plate Signing



The U.S. Navy celebrated the keel plate signing ceremony for the future USS Thomas G. Kelley (DDG 140) at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) on Aug. 30. During the ceremony, Marc Cote, a senior welder from General Dynamics BIW, welded the ship's namesake, Capt. Kelley's signature onto the keel plate which will be used in the future during the keel laying

ceremony. Capt. Kelley, a Medal of Honor recipient for his heroism during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Navy photo)

By Team Ships Public Affairs, Aug.30, 2024

The U.S. Navy celebrated the keel plate signing for one of the Navy's future Arleigh Burke-class Flight III destroyers at an event hosted at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) on Aug. 30.

The ceremony was held in honor of Capt. Thomas G. Kelley, a Medal of Honor recipient for his heroism during the Vietnam War and the namesake of the future USS Thomas G. Kelley (DDG 140).

During the ceremony, Marc Cote, a senior welder from General Dynamics BIW, welded Capt. Kelley's signature onto the keel plate which will be used in the future during the keel laying ceremony.

"What an honor! I am truly grateful and humbled that Secretary Del Toro chose me to be the namesake of DDG 140. To have the ship built in my backyard makes it more special and is a testament to the work skills of New England men and women. I am so proud of the capability this destroyer will eventually bring to the fleet"

Flight III destroyers feature the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar and incorporate upgrades to the electrical power and cooling capacity plus additional associated changes to provide greatly enhanced warfighting capability to the fleet.

PEO Ships, one of the Department of Defense's largest acquisition organizations, is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, auxiliary ships, special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

Keel Laid for Future USS William Charette



During a keel laying ceremony for the future USS William Charente on Aug. 29, a welder from General Dynamic Bath Iron Works etches the initials of the keel honorees into the keel plate. The initials are of the ship namesake's children, Margaret Ann Charette Henderson, Kati Charette Donovan, Laura Charette Bennett, Michael R. Charette, and the late William A. Charette. The namesake's daughters are the ship's co-sponsors. (U.S. Navy photo)

By Team Ships Strategic Operations, Aug. 29, 2024

Bath, Maine – The keel for the future USS William Charette (DDG 130), an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, was laid during a ceremony on Aug. 29 at General Dynamic Bath Iron Works (BIW).

The ship is named in honor of Master Chief Hospital Corpsman William R. Charette, a veteran who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic acts during the Korean War, while assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division in Panmunjom Corridor (DMZ), Korea.

Rear Adm. Darin K. Via, Surgeon General of the Navy and Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED), presided over the ceremony on behalf of the Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro.

“All of us in Navy Medicine are immensely proud to have a warship named after one of our own. We understand that it is one of the greatest honors you can receive in the Navy. The future USS William Charette will not only be a symbol of American strength but also a testament to the courage and dedication of Navy corpsmen,” said Rear Adm. Darin Via. “To have a ship named after a Navy corpsman is to hold to the maxim of ‘Corpsman Up!’ and embodies the ethos of courage, fidelity, and service before self.”

A keel laying ceremony represents the joining together of the ship’s modular components at the land level. During the ceremony, the keel is authenticated when the welder etches the initials of the keel honorees into the keel plate. The authentication was confirmed by Via, on behalf of the namesake’s children, Margaret Ann Charette Henderson, Kati Charette Donovan, Laura Charette Bennett, Michael R. Charette, and the late William A. Charette. The namesake’s daughters are the ship’s co-sponsors. BUMED Force Master Chief Patrick Paul (PaP) Mangaran, director of the Hospital Corps and leader of the Navy Medicine’s enlisted force, also read a statement on behalf of the Charette family.

“The future USS William Charette will be a welcomed addition to the fleet and another player on the field to provide the Navy with the most advanced warfighting capability” said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51 Class program manager, Program Executive

Office (PEO) Ships. “This ship honors the legacy of the late William Charette and his heroism during the Korean War. We are honored to have his daughters as sponsors and for the entire family to celebrate this significant milestone.”

A DDG 51 Flight III destroyer features the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar and incorporates upgrades to the electrical power and cooling capacity plus additional associated changes to provide greatly enhanced warfighting capability to the fleet. The future destroyers Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124), Louis H. Wilson Jr. (DDG 126), Patrick Gallagher (DDG 127), Quentin Walsh (DDG 132), John E. Kilmer (DDG 134), and Richard G. Lugar (DDG 136) are also under construction at BIW.

PEO Ships, one of the Department of Defense’s largest acquisition organizations, is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, auxiliary ships, special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

Senior Navy Leader Visits Indo-Pacific for AUKUS, Strengthens Interoperability from Under Secretary of the Navy Public Affairs



PERTH, Australia (Sept. 2, 2024) – USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) Sailors brief the Acting Under Secretary of the Navy Tom Mancinelli (front right) aboard the ship about their job, Sept. 2, during the Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period (STMP) in Perth, Australia. Mancinelli traveled to Australia to observe the AUKUS STMP and affirm and advance the strong alliance between Australia and the U.S. for an enduring resilient, free and open Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Capt. Courtney Hillson)

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Sept. 4, 2024

PERTH, Australia – Acting Under Secretary of the Navy Tom Mancinelli traveled to Perth, Australia, Sept. 1-3, to meet with partner navies, government officials, and military leaders to discuss their shared commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Mancinelli observed the Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period (STMP) and engaged with Royal Australian and U.S. Navy Sailors supporting this Australia, United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) milestone.

“AUKUS is a partnership to defend a free and open Indo-Pacific and defend our shared interests,” the acting Under Secretary said. “The United States is committed to its success as we take on the challenges of the 21st century together.”

Throughout the trip, he discussed the trilateral AUKUS partnership and held several engagements to communicate the Department of the Navy’s commitment to advancing interoperability, innovation, and maritime security.

The acting Under Secretary of the Navy met with senior defense leaders, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) leaders, and government leaders during his travel to Western Australia, to include Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence Richard Marles, Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Development Pat Conroy, Premier of Western Australia Roger Cook, Western Australia Minister for Defence Paul Papalia, Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Madeleine King, British High Commissioner Vicki Treadell, RAN Chief of Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond, and Director General Australian Submarine Agency Vice Adm. Jonathan Mead.

Leaders exchanged views on the importance of maritime security and spoke about AUKUS Optimal Pathway accomplishments, the significance of maintaining strong navies, as well as their shared commitment to ensure a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, complementing the existing regional security architecture.

“There is no substitute for presence. We are supporting this generational opportunity that will increase our maritime capabilities and interoperability, while also helping Australia develop and operate its own sovereign, conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines,” Mancinelli emphasized.

“The Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period, a hallmark of

AUKUS Pillar I for 2024, is a proud step forward in our shared journey,” said Mancinelli. “It represents one of the tangible ways in which our navies are sharing our talents and resources.”

At HMAS Stirling, the future home to Submarine Rotational Force – West, which is helping to shape Australia’s future fleet of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines, he visited commands and thanked personnel.

The acting Under Secretary toured the USS Hawaii (SSN 776) alongside Albanese and Marles. On board he spoke with Australian and U.S. Navy Sailors working together and conducting maintenance on the submarine.

Separately, Mancinelli met with Fleet Support Unit Sailors and visited the submarine tender ship USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) to talk with Sailors and meet defense and RAN leaders.

USS Emory S. Land Sailors are supporting maintenance activities aboard the Hawaii. This is the first time Australians have participated in a U.S. submarine maintenance period in Australia. Additionally, more than 30 Australian personnel who participated in a knowledge exchange period that began in January 2024 aboard Emory S. Land are executing the majority of planned maintenance work with U.S. support and oversight.

“I am excited to see progress firsthand, and I look forward to seeing an even closer partnership with the Australian Navy and British Navy in the future as we work together to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Mancinelli then toured the Henderson Shipyard and Hoffman Engineering, an Australian firm that supplies parts for Australia’s Collins class submarines.

“We’re making historic investments in our own defense industrial base capabilities and standing shoulder to shoulder

with two countries that share our values and our commitment to peace and security,” he noted.

Lastly, he visited a Perth-based think tank and engaged in dialogue with defense and national security experts about AUKUS. He also discussed the strategic importance of the enduring Alliance between Australia and the U.S. and the ways in which our navies are working together to uphold the rules-based order.

The U.S. and Australian navies share a mutual interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and open sea lanes for trade and commerce. They conduct frequent cooperative deployments, and regularly operate together during flagship theater exercises such as Pacific Partnership, Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), and the Australian-led Kakadu.

This trip marked Mancinelli’s first international trip as the acting Under Secretary of the Navy and his first visit to Perth, Australia.

USS Laboon Returns Home from Combat Deployment



Photo By [Chief Petty Officer Matthew Jackson](#) | 240901-N-MJ491-1023 NORFOLK, Va. (September 1, 2024) Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG 58), is guided by a tugboat during it's return to homeport. Laboon, assigned to Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (IKE CSG), returned to its homeport on Naval Station Norfolk on September 1 following a deployment to the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Matthew N. Jackson)

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Sept. 1, 2024

NORFOLK, Virginia – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG 58) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, from an independent deployment to the U.S. 2nd, 5th, and 6th fleet areas of operation, Sept. 1.

Laboon deployed for 279 days to the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea providing deterrence and defense to U.S. partners.

Rear Adm. Kavon Hakimzadeh, commander, Carrier Strike Group

(CSG) 2, was on the pier to welcome home the crew of Laboon.

“We are honored to welcome back the men and women of USS Laboon who have proven their proficiency and resolve throughout a demanding deployment,” said Hakimzadeh. “From safeguarding critical maritime routes to deterring threats in volatile regions, Laboon’s crew has exemplified the very best of our Navy’s tradition of excellence. We are deeply proud of what they have accomplished, and we thank each Sailor and their families for their unwavering dedication to our nation’s security.”

While independently deployed, Laboon participated in the multi-national Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden. In support of freedom of navigation, Laboon and her crew countered multiple attacks carried out by Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists in the Red Sea.

“It has been a challenging nine month deployment to hostile waters, but this team demonstrated time and again just how capable our warships are and that we have the best trained most professional warfighters in the world ready to bring the fight to any enemy,” said Cmdr. Eric Blomberg, Laboon’s commanding officer.

Chief Petty Officer Rickey Gisclair attributes Laboon’s success to training and teamwork.

“This deployment really embodied why we train so hard and every Sailor stepping up to fulfill their role in a challenging environment,” said Gisclair.

While on deployment, a refrain heard frequently onboard was: “If we have to fight; we fight and we win!” Laboon is named for Pittsburgh, Pa. native John Francis Laboon who left to

serve his country as a U.S. Naval officer. After attending Carnegie Technical Institute (now Carnegie Mellon University), he was commissioned at the Naval Academy and served as the communications officer, gunnery and torpedo officer and executive officer on USS Peto (SS 265), a Gato-class submarine in World War II. During a Western Pacific patrol, while under intense enemy fire, he rescued a downed pilot from heavily-mined waters and was awarded the Silver Star. Shortly after the war, he left the Navy only to be called back to duty as a Chaplain to become Father John Francis Laboon or "Father Jake."

During their 5th Fleet operations, Laboon upheld the tradition of Father Jake, rescuing three mariners in distress in the Gulf of Aden who had been stranded adrift at sea for ten days.

U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse comprises of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab al-Mandeb.

NAVEUR-NAVAF, headquartered in Naples, Italy, operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime forces ready to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic to ensure access, deter aggression, and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC) is responsible for manning, training, equipping and employing more than 125 ships, 1,000 aircraft, and 103,000 active duty service members and government employees, and providing combat-ready forces forward to numbered fleets and combatant commanders around the globe in support of U.S. national interests. USFFC also serves as the Navy's Service Component Commander to both U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Strategic Command, and providing naval forces in support of joint missions as Commander, Naval Forces Northern Command (NAVNORTH) and Commander, Naval Forces Strategic Command (NAVSTRAT). USFFC is the Strategic Command Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC STRAT), and executes Task Force Atlantic in coordination with U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

For any inquiries, contact usffc_nflt_pa@us.navy.mil. For more news from USFFC, visit www.usff.navy.mil and for more information visit www.facebook.com/usfleetforces or www.twitter.com/usfleetforces.

Hughes and Boost Mobile Demonstrate Automated, Multi-Transport Network Management for Resiliency at the Tactical Edge

From Hughes Network Systems, Aug. 27, 2024

Standalone 5G Network with enterprise management and control ensure Primary Alternate Contingency Emergency (PACE) planning for warfighter communications

GERMANTOWN, Md., Aug, 27, 2024 –[Hughes Network Systems](#) and [Boost Mobile](#), EchoStar (Nasdaq: SATS) companies, successfully demonstrated optimized, multi-transport network management for the U.S. Navy. The demonstration, which took place earlier this year, tested remote network orchestration, wide area network (WAN) resiliency, and secure Radio Access Network (RAN) sharing between standalone Private 5G networks operating at the U.S. Navy Air Station, Whidbey Island, Washington, and a base in Hawaii.

Hughes collaborated with Boost Mobile, both of which are part of the EchoStar family of companies. Boost Mobile's innovative Open-RAN-based 5G networking technologies for US-wide public network deployment experience provided a rich heritage for the standalone, secure 5G networks on each base. In addition, Hughes implemented its intelligent network orchestration capabilities, Smart Network Edge (SNE) mission-planning technology, and Network Management System (NMS). Together, these technologies maintained communications in contested and congested environments.

“The combined team successfully demonstrated a flexible and resilient mission network that dynamically switched communications paths to ensure uninterrupted situational awareness,” said Dr. Rajeev Gopal, vice president of Advanced Programs for the Defense Division at Hughes. “We are ready to implement smart network orchestration and secure Private 5G networks, for the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure that users have critical command and control information when they need it most, even in disrupted, occasionally disconnected, and low-bandwidth conditions.”

The network supported Automated PACE planning, leveraging the powerful Hughes NMS and SNE technologies that dynamically

utilize multiple transport paths to deliver situational awareness. These advanced automation techniques optimize capacity, QoS, and various time/space-based resource commitments to speed up changes and access to SATCOM resources. With command-in-the-loop, the Hughes technology can process new service requests in less than 5 seconds to accommodate new threats in the theatre and automatically distribute information across paths orchestrated by Hughes SNE. The NMS and SNE are critical enablers for state-of-the-art resilient communications utilizing multiple diverse transports, including GEO, MEO, LEO, and 5G systems.

The demonstration confirmed that the EchoStar Private 5G ORAN network can maintain secure connectivity for devices and applications when users travel outside the naval base. This capability supports a concept of operations where a device running on the Whidbey Island NAS 5G network can travel to another location and still securely access applications that reside at Whidbey Island. The Navy can use this secure internet access for missions requiring a user to relocate from one base to another.

Aug. 30 - Sept. 2 U.S. Central Command Update

From U.S. Central Command

Sept. 2, 2024

Houthis attack two crude oil tankers

TAMPA, Fla. – On the morning of Sep. 2, the Iranian-backed Houthis attacked two crude oil tankers, the Panama

flagged/owned, Greek operated MV BLUE LAGOON I and the Saudi flagged, owned, and operated MV AMJAD, with two ballistic missiles and a one-way attack uncrewed aerial system, hitting both vessels. Both vessels are laden with crude oil. The MV AMJAD is carrying approximately two million barrels of oil, almost twice the amount onboard the Greek-owned MV DELTA SOUNION, which the Houthis attacked on Aug. 21. Currently, salvage efforts are underway in the Southern Red Sea for the disabled MV DELTA SOUNION, which is still on fire and threatens the possibility of a major environmental disaster.

These reckless acts of terrorism by the Houthis continue to destabilize regional and global commerce, as well as put the lives of civilian mariners and maritime ecosystems at risk.

U.S. Central Command will continue to work with international partners and allies to protect commerce and mitigate potential impacts to the environment despite the irresponsible and careless actions of the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Sept. 2, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – In the past 24 hours, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed two missile systems in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these systems presented an imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions were taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

Aug. 31, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – In the past 24 hours, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed one Iranian-backed Houthi uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) and one uncrewed surface

vessel (USV) in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined these systems presented a clear and imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. This action was taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

Aug. 30, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – In the past 24 hours, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed two Iranian-backed Houthi uncrewed aerial vehicles in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these UAVs presented a clear and imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions were taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure.

Acting Sec. Su, Navy Sec. Del Toro Highlight Workforce Development, National Security at Newport News' Apprentice School

Toured site of PCU John F. Kennedy's construction, world's most capable, adaptable carrier

From the U.S. Department of Labor, Aug. 29, 2025

WASHINGTON – Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su and Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited Virginia today to see how the Apprentice School in Newport News – one of the nation’s critical apprenticeship programs – is making construction of one of the world’s most capable and adaptable aircraft carriers, the PCU John F. Kennedy, possible.

During their visit, Secretaries Su and Del Toro highlighted their shared commitment to strengthening the Department of Defense’s organic and industrial base workforce.

“Our partnership with the U.S. Navy will enhance the quality of jobs for workers who play an essential role in protecting our nation,” said Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su. “The Department of Labor is committed to making sure our Navy has the strongest, most diverse and skilled workforce needed to ensure military readiness and modernization.”

The U.S. Navy and the Department of Labor have partnered to help advance Secretary Del Toro’s Maritime Statecraft Initiative and to create high-quality, good-paying jobs critical to national security, using practices included in the departments of Labor and Commerce’s Good Jobs Principles to fill the estimated 10,000 jobs needed per year over the next 10 years in the growing maritime industry.

“The U.S. Navy’s investments in the highest possible job quality for its workforce will help to reinvigorate America’s comprehensive maritime power,” said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. “With skilled workers who represent the best of America, the defense industrial base and maritime ecosystem will continue to thrive with an ingenuity and dedication recognized around the world.”

Good Jobs Principles seek to create broad, equitable access to good jobs and attract the most diverse pool of talent possible, by reaching into traditionally underserved

populations and communities. By doing so, the departments of Labor and Defense intend to build the skilled, diverse and ready workforce needed to strengthen the U.S. Navy in an era of intense strategic competition.

As part of his Maritime Statecraft strategy, Secretary Del Toro is rallying organized labor as an essential stakeholder in ensuring America's maritime power. Currently, the Navy is piloting a program to train experienced union welders to join a rotational expeditionary workforce that deploys to shipyards nationwide to support naval objectives. In October, the first class of 169 union welders will begin work on PCU John F. Kennedy at Newport News.

In this joint effort, the departments will pursue the following key outcomes:

- Expanded equitable workforce development pathways to good jobs through pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- Broader active partnership with the Department of Labor's Job Corps program.
- Developed and expanded partnerships with agencies, including the department's Employment and Training Administration, Veterans Employment and Training Service, and Women's Bureau to advance to advance workforce development initiatives aligned with the Good Jobs Principles.

Founded in 1919, the Apprentice School at Newport News Shipbuilding offers eight advanced programs of study and apprenticeships in 19 shipbuilding disciplines for terms from four to eight years. Offering apprentices the opportunity to

earn college credit, receive competitive pay and benefits and learn a trade, the institution is accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education and registered with the Virginia Apprenticeship Council. The Apprentice School is a Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador.