Firefighting Isolates Blazes to Two Locations on Bonhomme Richard



An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter provides aerial firefighting support while using a Bambi Bucket to fight the fire aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard. U.S. NAVY / Naval Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Kyle Daggett

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy and civilian firefighters combatting the blaze on the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in San Diego have isolated the fires to two separate locations, the Navy said.

In an 11 a.m. Pacific time July 14 news conference streamed on Facebook, Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, said that two fires remained on the ship, one forward and the other aft.

"We have investigated the four main engineering spaces and found no major damage," Sobeck said. "There is no threat to the fuel tanks, which [are] well-below any active fires or heat sources. The ship is stable and the structure is safe."

He said the firefighters are "combatting from both within and outside the ship from multiple access points."

He said that so far 61 personnel – 38 Sailors and 23 civilian firefighters – had been treated for minor injuries and smoke inhalation. None remained hospitalized.

The admiral praised the MH-60S helicopter crews of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 3, who have dropped more than 1,000 large buckets full of water on the fires in the ship's superstructure, "cooling the superstructure and flight deck, enabling fire crews to get onboard internally to fight the

fire.”


Sailors and Federal San Diego Firefighters move to provide firefighting assistance on board USS Bonhomme Richard the morning of July 13. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communications Specialist Seaman Lily Gebauer
Tugs also continue to provide water streams to assist the firefighters.

Sobeck thanked “the people of San Diego, National City, Coronado, and all the other communities in San Diego County for their continued support. For more than 48 hours brave Sailors from commands all across San Diego have been working tirelessly alongside Federal Fire San Diego to get this fire under control.”

“I’d like to also thank our partners from state and county as well as the Coast Guard for monitoring the potential impacts to the environment,” he added. “As we continue to fight the fire, we remain cognizant of environmental concerns regarding the water and air quality.”


An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 3 combats the fires aboard the Bonhomme Richard. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class David Mora Jr.
“Going forward, the Navy will do a thorough investigation of the incident to include assessing the cause of the fire and damage to the ship, but right now our focus remains on putting out the fire and keeping people safe,” the admiral said.

The fire broke out at about 8:30 a.m. Pacific time on July 12 while the Bonhomme Richard was pierside at Naval Base San Diego for a maintenance availability. About 160 Sailors of the crew of about 1,000 were on board at the time, according to the Navy, which has not officially linked the fire to a cause, though several media outlets have reported there was an explosion aboard Bonhomme Richard.