

Navy Announces Completion of P-8A Poseidon Salvage Operation



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KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii – The Navy completed salvage operations of the P-8A Poseidon in Kaneohe Bay on Dec. 3, the on-scene commander told reporters Dec. 4.

“The aircraft is out of the bay, and the salvage operation is complete,” said Rear Adm. Kevin P. Lenox, who is also commander of Carrier Strike Group 3. “The team worked smoothly through the weekend under ideal conditions and everything happened according to the plan.”

After staging all of the required equipment on Thursday, Nov.

30, and Friday, Dec. 1, Navy Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) 1, working alongside local and off-island specialists, and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Supervisor of Salvage (SUPSALV) arrived before sunrise on Saturday, Dec. 2, to begin inflating the salvage roller bags used to extract the aircraft from the water. Under the close observation of divers, the aircraft was lifted higher in the water and off any coral by 8:30 a.m. The aircraft was rotated and floated into position next to the runway by 10:30 a.m.

“The team spent a lot of time using bags of different sizes – inflating and deflating – to make small adjustments to the aircraft,” said Lenox. “Sometimes it took an hour to get everything right just to move the aircraft five feet.”

Once on land, the salvage crew reinforced the bags and wheels, locked down the gears on the pulling machines, and placed absorbent material between the aircraft and the bay as a precaution. They continued pulling the aircraft on bags up the ramp to a flat area on the runway. The team then lowered the plane onto jacks, swapped out all six tires, inspected the landing gear – assessed it as sound, and then towed the aircraft to the washrack for a freshwater rinse.

“I again want to thank Marine Corps Base Hawaii (MCBH), Navy Supervisor of Salvage, SMIT Salvage, and Center Lift for their safe and professional execution of the salvage operation,” said Lenox.

Additionally, Dec. 3, divers from the Hawaii Dept. of Land and Natural Resources Division of Aquatic Resources conducted a preliminary dive to observe the site, and plan to continue their underwater assessment Dec. 4.

“Yesterday, we were able to get into the water with our federal partners for about two and a half hours,” said Kim Fuller, aquatic biologist with the Hawaii Dept. of Land and Natural Resources’ Division of Aquatic Resources, during the

Dec. 4 joint press conference. "We were able to delineate the majority of what we believe is the primary impact of the airplane. Our assessment was just preliminary, so right now we're just working to understand the extent of the damage and spatial delineation of the impact."

The Navy and Marine Corps remain committed to working with appropriate local and federal authorities to ensure the correct actions are taken to understand, measure, and mitigate any impacts to the local habitat.

"We will continue the work that needs to be done to characterize the state of the coral and damage that was done in the area," said Col. Jeremy Beaven, commanding officer, MCBH. "In my role as the commanding officer, I have oversight responsibilities and obligations that I take on willingly. And, I will certainly be working with our state partners and agencies, again, in deference to their expertise."

The aircraft is in a parking spot where it will be available for the investigating teams and where Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing Ten will begin the reclamation and repair process.

"The Navy is conducting a thorough investigation of the mishap to determine the cause and prevent similar mishaps in the future," said Lenox.

The P-8A crew, assigned to Whidbey Island, Washington-based Patrol Squadron (VP) 4 "Skinny Dragons," was on a detachment in support of maritime homeland defense when the aircraft overshot the runway and ended up in Kaneohe Bay Nov. 20. There were nine crewmembers on board – three pilots and six crewmembers (two officer and four enlisted). All crewmembers safely evacuated the aircraft and no injuries were reported. The incident is under investigation.