

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard wraps up dry dock phase of North Carolina Maintenance



Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) successfully undocked Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS North Carolina (SSN 777), Aug. 12, 2026, clearing a critical benchmark in the undersea asset's scheduled lifecycle maintenance period.

North Carolina has been at the shipyard undergoing restoration and modernization, and this undocking evolution marks the successful wrap-up of the maintenance work completed in dry dock. The transition to the waterborne phase prepares North Carolina for its return to operational status, bringing a modernized asset closer to rejoining the fleet as a ready, lethal force built to win. Over its years of service, and with a little naval lore, North Carolina is affectionately known as

the "Lucky Girl." The nickname stems from the triple-seven hull number, along with teak wood decking salvaged from the battleship of the same name, which is built into the structure as a good luck charm.

While luck remains a cherished tradition, the successful completion of this maintenance phase relied on diligent effort. The milestone was propelled by a shared partnership and alignment between Khonsa Phommavong, PHNSY & IMF North Carolina project supervisor, and U.S. Navy Cmdr. Michael Fritts, North Carolina's commanding officer. Their unified leadership ensured that the civilian shipyard workforce and the submarine crew operated as a single, cohesive team.

"Cmdr. Fritts' leadership fostered an environment of standards and expectations, complete transparency, and mutual accountability," said Phommavong. "By maintaining an open dialogue regarding daily priorities and risks, he ensured that both the ship's force and our civilians were aligned on the same mission, effectively eliminating silos and driving us toward a unified goal."

Having arrived just after North Carolina entered the dry dock, Fritts led his crew from the deckplates and integrated heavily into the shipyard as a critical fixture throughout the project. "I'm extremely proud of my crew, the A77 Project Team, and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for undocking North Carolina on time," said Fritts.

Fritts expanded upon this strength of partnership, emphasizing the resilience of the joint team. "Our teams have overcome many challenges due to the complexity of a major overhaul; however, thanks to strong collaboration, we have kept our availability schedule on track. True to its 'No Ka Oi' (the best) motto, PHNSY continues to set the standard for excellence," Fritts said.

Shipyard Commander U.S. Navy Capt. Ryan McCrillis agreed,

emphasizing that the project's success belongs to the workforce.

"Returning a critical asset like North Carolina back to the fleet is a massive accomplishment, but the real story is the dedication of the people who made it happen," McCrillis said. "The strength and spirit of aloha this workforce has is immense. It drives our people to support one another, face every demanding shift together, and pour their pride into this mission. I could not be prouder of how this team stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the crew to deliver for the fleet."

North Carolina's undocking served as a nostalgic moment for McCrillis. Seeing this particular boat reach this milestone during his tenure as PHNSY & IMF commander brings a chapter of his own submariner history full circle.

"Having a personal connection with this submarine, I am very excited about their undocking," he said. "I was lucky enough to see them in action over several months aboard in the West Pacific while qualifying for my Engineering Dolphins."

The sentiment of working together rings true among the leaders and crew alike, ensuring the platforms delivered to our warfighters are resilient, capable, and ready to dominate the maritime domain. "Delivering these capabilities represents more than just numbers," Phommavong said. "It is a testament to our workforce's dedication to ensuring the Tar Heel boat returns to the Pacific Fleet at peak lethality." While the project is not complete just yet, Phommavong is already reflecting on the workforce's achievement with pride.

"When I look back at the effort invested to get North Carolina ready for undocking, what makes me most proud is the unwavering commitment and dedication of our people. It's very motivating," said Phommavong. "The days in the dry dock are long and the conditions are demanding, but the workforce, guided by the No Ka 'Oispirit, never lost sight of the mission."

I am truly proud and honored to be part of this team. We have learned a lot alongside each other, and it is heartwarming to be able to call each other family.”

North Carolina was commissioned May 3, 2008. North Carolina is the fourth Virginia-class submarine and the fourth U.S. Navy ship to be named for the Tar Heel state. North Carolina is homeported in Pearl Harbor and assigned to Submarine Squadron 1. North Carolina is capable of supporting various missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike warfare, special operations support, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

PHNSY & IMF’s mission is to keep the Navy’s fleet “Fit to Fight” by repairing, maintaining, and modernizing the Navy’s fast-attack submarines and surface ships. Strategically located in the heart of the Pacific, it is the most comprehensive fleet repair and maintenance facility between the U.S. West Coast and the Far East.

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