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Destroyer Damaged by Barge in Pier-Side Incident at Ingalls Shipbuilding

By: [Sam LaGrone](#)

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M/V Hawk approaching Ingalls Shipbuilding on March 29, 2019 with the floating dry dock. via WLOX

*This post was updated with HII and Naval Sea Systems Command statements on the damage to **Delbert Black**.*

An under-construction Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer was damaged by a barge while it was pier-side at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss., according to a statement from Huntington Ingalls Industries. **Delbert Black (DDG-119)** was pier-side at the yard at the same time heavy-lift ship **M/V Hawk** was arriving from Qingdao, China to deliver a floating dry dock, [according to a report in *The Maritime Executive*](#). While approaching the yard, **Hawk** and the dry dock struck a testing barge alongside **Black**, according to the shipyard. “The barge, which was supporting electrical work aboard the destroyer, in turn, made contact with the destroyer,” read the statement from HII. “There were minor injuries treated at the scene by Ingalls’ medical personnel. The incident remains under investigation.” The destroyer suffered some damage as a result of the incident and took on water. “There was some water intrusion into the ship, and that damage is currently being assessed and repaired,” a yard spokesman told USNI News on Saturday. In a separate Saturday statement, a Naval Sea Systems Command spokeswoman told USNI News “the ship is stable and the Navy is working alongside HII to conduct further assessments and determine a repair plan. No significant injuries have been reported and all personnel have been accounted for.” It’s unclear the level of damage to the dry dock or the barge. The contract of the Flight IIA **Delbert Black** was awarded to HII as part of a 2013 multi-year destroyer deal. It was launched on September 2017 and is scheduled to commission later this year.

Hawk is among the world’s largest semi-submersibles and operated [by the Norwegian company Offshore Heavy Transport](#). **The following is the complete March 29, 2019 statement from Huntington Ingalls.**

*At approximately 10:13 a.m. (CT) today, a heavy lift ship delivering a floating dry dock to Ingalls Shipbuilding, made contact with a test barge berthed alongside the destroyer **Delbert D. Black (DDG 119)**, which is under construction at Ingalls. The barge, which was supporting electrical work aboard the destroyer, in turn, made contact with the destroyer. There were minor injuries treated at the scene by Ingalls’ medical personnel. The incident remains under investigation.*

Source: <https://news.usni.org>

Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to Depart Norfolk on Monday

By: [Ben Werner](#)

March 29, 2019 1:55 PM

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) is expected to leave Norfolk on April 1 for the start of a deployment that will end in a homeport shift to San Diego, Calif. The carrier strike group deployment will be the second from the East Coast since the Navy implemented a dynamic force employment concept that seeks to shake up where carriers deploy to and how they spend their time on deployments. It is unclear how DFE will shape this deployment, which will already be unusual due to the homeport shift: the carrier will likely go through the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East and into the Western Pacific before heading to California. **Lincoln**’s homeport move is part of a [three-carrier homeport swap](#), which involves **USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)** leaving San Diego for Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton, Wash., and **USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74)** leaving Bremerton for Norfolk. **Vinson** is slated for an incremental maintenance availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. **Stennis** is undergoing a midlife refuelling and complex overhaul (RCOH) at Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia. **Lincoln**, which completed its RCOH in 2017, had been a West Coast-based carrier before entering the Newport News Shipbuilding yard in March 2013 and will now return to the Pacific carrier fleet. Joining **Lincoln** in the Lincoln Carrier Strike Group are the nine squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW 7); staffs of Carrier Strike Group Twelve (CSG 12) and Destroyer Squadron Two (DESRON 2); Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers **USS Bainbridge (DDG-96)**, **USS Mason (DDG-87)** and **USS Nitze (DDG-94)**; and Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser **USS Leyte Gulf (CG-55)**. **USS Gonzalez (DDG-66)**

participated in the Lincoln CSG's predeployment training but departed last week for an independent deployment to conduct ballistic missile defense and theater security cooperation. Also, when the CSG nears Gibraltar, Álvaro de Bazán-class frigate



ESPS Méndez Núñez (F 104) from the Spanish Armada, will join the group.

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier **USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72)** illuminates its hull number on the ship's island structure with holiday colors while moored pierside at Naval Station Norfolk. **US Navy photo.**

[Mendez Nunez trained with the Lincoln](#)

CSG earlier this year in Norfolk and [returned in early March to its homeport](#) of Ferrol, Spain. The frigate is expected to integrate into the group for the duration of the deployment. For Spain, **Mendez Nunez's** global deployment is intended to showcase how well the frigate operates in a CSG configuration. General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works is expected partner

with Spanish shipbuilder Navantia in submitting a frigate proposal based on the F-100 design as part of the U.S. Navy's future frigate (FFG(X)) competition.



Álvaro de Bazán-class Spanish navy frigate **Méndez Núñez (F 104)** prepares to pull alongside the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier **USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72)** to perform a replenishment-at-sea exercise on Jan. 29, 2019. **US Navy Photo**

For the FFG(X), the U.S. Navy is only considering designs of ships already in use. The Fincantieri Marine Group, Austal USA,

Lockheed Martin and Huntington Ingalls Industries are also expected to submit designs to the U.S. Navy. After arriving in San Diego later this year with the Lincoln CSG, **Mendez Nunez** will complete its circumnavigation of the globe, commemorating the 500th anniversary of Ferdinand Magellan's Spanish-flagged fleet departing for what would become the first circumnavigation of the world.

The following are the units that are deploying on April 1, 2019, according to U.S. Fleet Forces.

Carrier Strike Group 12

Aircraft carrier

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72), homeported in Norfolk, Va. (shifting to San Diego, Calif., upon completion of deployment)

Carrier Air Wing 7

CVW 7, based at Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., is embarked aboard *Lincoln* and includes a total of nine squadrons and detachments:

- The "Fist of the Fleet" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 25 from Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif.
- The "Sidewinders" of VFA-86 from Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif.
- The "Jolly Rogers" of VFA-103 from Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.
- The "Pukin' Dogs" of VFA-143 from Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.
- The "Patriots" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140 from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash.
- The "Bluetails" of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 121 from Naval Station Norfolk, Va.
- The "Rawhides" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 from Naval Station Norfolk, Va.
- The "Night Dippers" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5 from Naval Station Norfolk, Va.
- The "Griffins" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 79 from Naval Air Station North Island, Calif.

Destroyer Squadron 2

The leadership of DESRON 2 is embarked aboard *Lincoln* and commands the guided-missile destroyers that are operating as part of the CSG.

- **USS *Bainbridge* (DDG-96)**, homeported in Norfolk, Va.
- **USS *Mason* (DDG-87)**, homeported in Norfolk, Va.
- **USS *Nitze* (DDG-94)**, homeported in Norfolk, Va.
- **ESPS *Méndez Núñez* (F 104)**, Ferrol Naval Base, Spain (will join the strike group in the Eastern Atlantic)

Guided-missile Cruiser

USS *Leyte Gulf* (CG-55), homeported in Norfolk, Va.

Source: <https://news.usni.org>



MAYPORT, Fla. (March 28, 2019) Lt. Cmdr. Shane Brewer, executive officer of the Freedom-class littoral combat ship **USS *Milwaukee* (LCS 5)**, gives a tour of the ship to Mexican naval officers from the staff of Mexico's Secretary of the Navy. *Milwaukee* is currently at homeport at Naval Station Mayport. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Anderson W. Branch/Released)

U.K. Firm Claims it Found Famed U.S. Warship *Bonhomme Richard*; Experts Aren't So Sure

By: [Ben Werner](#)

March 29, 2019 5:00 PM



John Paul Jones, **USS *Bonhomme Richard*** and a satellite image of the U.K.

A British raconteur says he found the wreckage of Capt. John Paul Jones' flagship, *Bonhomme Richard*, but across the Atlantic historians and Navy officials aren't as certain. In November, a five-person team at Merlin Burrows, an English satellite imagery firm, announced they had pinpointed the wreck of ***Bonhomme Richard*** close to the Yorkshire shore. Combining data from historical accounts of ***Bonhomme Richard***'s Sept. 23, 1779, battle with **HMS *Serapis*** with publicly available satellite imagery and X-ray data,

the Merlin Burrows team located a wreck in 2017 that they're confident is Jones' famed ship, said Bruce Blackburn, chief executive of Merlin Burrows. "We go find stuff. We don't look for it," Blackburn told USNI News in a telephone interview earlier this year. "If there's a myth and legend and historical principals, we'll fire up the satellite." Scans of the wreck near Flamborough Head, where **Bonhomme Richard** battled **Serapis** nearly 240 years ago, show the location of what Blackburn believes is a ship's bell and a figurehead. He's convinced these are from **Bonhomme Richard**. The British press, including the [BBC](#), ran stories of the find with posted photos of burnt timbers said to be from **Bonhomme Richard**. The British tend to take a less sentimental view of John Paul Jones – he's considered more of a pirate – than how he's revered in the U.S., Blackburn said. Still, he is thrilled about the find, because the Jones story is compelling. The battle against **Serapis** is where Jones issued his famous response to the suggestion he surrender, saying "I have not yet begun to fight." Jones' words have served as the model of grit and determination for generations of sailors in the Navy he's said to have fathered. Definitively finding his flagship's wreck, Blackburn said, could be a boon to the local tourist industry and a great bit of marketing for his firm.

Not So Fast

Across the Atlantic, though, U.S.-based researchers who have for decades searched for **Bonhomme Richard** say not so fast. The same historical documents Blackburn used, such as eyewitness accounts, ship logs and sea drift modeling, suggest **Bonhomme Richard** sank further away from shore, nearly at the horizon, researcher Melissa Ryan told USNI News. Ryan, vice president of the Mystic, Conn., Global Foundation for Ocean Exploration and the foundation's lead **Bonhomme Richard** researcher, has worked with U.S., British and French navy officials since 2006 to find the wreck. Wooden shipwrecks, such as the one Blackburn found, litter the seafloor close to shore along the eastern coast of Great Britain, Ryan said. Some probably date as far back to Viking times. Perhaps 1,500 wrecks line the British coast, many relatively close to shore, Robert Neyland, head of the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command's underwater archeology branch, told USNI News. Neyland has worked with Ryan in searching for **Bonhomme Richard** and shares her view the wreck is likely farther offshore. Finding timbers dating from the 1700s provides circumstantial evidence that the wreck might be the right age but doesn't prove its identity, Neyland said. Otherwise, from what he's seen in media reports, Neyland thinks Blackburn's proof is thin. "We've been in contact with Historic England and they didn't think it was worth a survey to verify," Neyland said. However, as searches move further away from the coast, Ryan said shipwrecks tend to be found further apart and tend to be modern in design – made of steel and with engine components. Ryan said this part of the coast is called torpedo alley because of the abundance of shipping sunk by German submarines during both World Wars. In the middle of torpedo alley, Ryan's team found in 2012 what she says is definitively a wooden shipwreck. They've found an anchor that corresponds in size to one believed to have been on **Bonhomme Richard** and rigging material including a spar and a deadeye with a lanyard still preserved that suggest the wreck is from an appropriate era to be **Bonhomme Richard**. "We know we have a wooden sailing ship. We haven't found any evidence of anything modern," Ryan said. Based on the history of **Bonhomme Richard**'s engagement with **Serapis**, Ryan said both ships moved toward the horizon. Jones, in victory, took over **Serapis** and salvaged what he could from **Bonhomme Richard**, which was severely damaged and drifting with the current. "Why would a wooden ship sink that far offshore when it hadn't run up against a rock or reef?" Ryan asks. The answer is simple, Ryan said. The wreck her team found suffered damage in battle, such as the one recorded between **Bonhomme Richard** and **Serapis**. "Common sense tells you if the ship sunk close to shore it would've been found," Neyland said.

Sticking to his Story

Blackburn knows other researchers are skeptical of his findings. Their hesitation, he says, is caused by a belief that Merlin Burrows is a disrupter to the heritage industry – those looking for sea wrecks or land-based archaeological sites. "It's obviously a bitter pill to swallow. Their ladder is up against the wrong wall," Blackburn said about the skeptics. "We don't expect them to be jumping for joy, but our discovery of the **Bonhomme Richard** is 100-percent absolutely true." Other researchers, Blackburn says, rely on fundraising to bankroll expeditions that may or may not yield results. The firm follows what Blackburn described as a transactional business model. Using satellite and X-ray data, Blackburn says he can provide historians and treasure hunters precise coordinates of where to search – but for a price. "The etiquette is, whoever owns or has title of the wreck would reimburse the finder," Blackburn said. It's not clear how much revenue Merlin Burrows is bringing in. Blackburn owns a minority 20-percent stake in the company, and another investor owns the remaining 80 percent, according to incorporation documents filed with the British government. Blackburn told USNI News the financial backing from the other shareholder is not enough to fund Merlin Burrows' operations. Blackburn offered to sell his data to the U.S. Navy, considered the owner of **Bonhomme Richard**. "We were going to charge money," Blackburn said. "We are a business." Paul Taylor, a spokesman for the Naval History and Heritage Command, provided USNI News with a statement about Blackburn's offer. "We are interested in hearing further details, look forward to examining data collected from the site, and, if **Bonhomme Richard** is located, would be very interested in ensuring the wreck is protected," the statement said.

Value of The Find

For Blackburn, more than recouping money for the search, he sees locating **Bonhomme Richard** as a potential boon to tourism in his home of North Yorkshire, where Blackburn has a stake in a variety of small businesses in the area, according to incorporation documents filed with the British government. For Ryan, finding **Bonhomme Richard** offers the potential to get a first-hand glimpse at what life was like for sailors at the birth of the U.S. Navy. The wreck her team found is mostly buried by compacted sediment, which hopefully kept the ship's remnants well preserved. Ryan hopes the find will improve

the understanding of what ships during the period were like, especially the technology to retrofit what was originally a merchant ship into the warship **Bonhomme Richard**. For example, Ryan said Jones insisted on using used iron knees to brace the ship and iron ballast, a rarity for the time because of the expense. Finding iron knees or ballast would be a distinctive clue because of their rarity, Ryan said. Finding cannon would offer more definitive clues to the ship's true identity because cannon typically carry markings from the foundry that made and sold them. Also, Jones' personal belongings went down with the ship, which, if found, would help identify the wreck and add to what is known about Jones. "*The ship's bell is the holy grail because it would have Duc de Duras, the ship's original name,*" Ryan said. As for Blackburn's find, Ryan isn't ready to believe his wreck is **Bonhomme Richard** without more proof. But she thinks his wreck has the potential to be a significant find for historians. "*I think he found an incredible wreck,*" Ryan said. "*It's an old wreck and it will tell us something. It's going to be very interesting.*"

Source: <https://news.usni.org>

From the Azov Sea to the Black Sea: Russia's Maritime Campaign

March 26, 2019

By Jonathan Hall



Military base at Perevalne during the 2014 Crimean crisis. (Wikimedia Commons)

Almost five years following the Minsk Agreements, the war in Ukraine has claimed the lives of over [13,000](#) individuals. While much of the attention has been on the annexation of Crimea and continuous fighting throughout the Donbas region,

Russia has more recently added a maritime component to its campaign with aggressions in the [Sea of Azov](#). The Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, sees the possibility of the region being used as a "[springboard for further expansion](#)," a land invasion of Mariupol being his greatest concern. While many may fear expansion into the land environment, the far more likely scenario is westward progress by Russian naval forces, furthering their disruptive campaign off Ukraine's coastline.

Linking the Seas

Western defense planners and analysts often refer to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov as independent entities. Distinct in their own rights, the latter largely unknown until recent events, what is important to note is the Russian government views them as inextricably linked. In 2003, President Putin reiterated this in stating, "*the Azov-Black Sea basin as a whole...the zone of our strategic interests.*" Within this context, a useful analytical framework of inspection would be Russia's "[Boa Constrictor Strategy](#)" (Тактика Удава). Attempting to economically strangle the Ukrainian government, the blockade of the Kerch Strait serves as the first example to do so in the maritime environment. [Hamstringing shipment](#) to and from the port cities of Mariupol and Berdyansk, located in the Sea of Azov, Russia is likely to continue these economically disruptive and militarily aggressive activities in the greater Black Sea region. The object of such operations would invariably be the littoral waters near Ukraine's western port city – Odessa. While maintaining the status quo – relative restraint in deploying land forces – the Kremlin could similarly hamper maritime commerce, endanger sea lines of communication (SLOC), and therefore dissuade future investment in the region. Loss of industry and access to the sea via de facto Russian control of the remaining Ukrainian coastline could both financially cripple Kyiv's economy and, in effect, landlock the country.

Fighting in the Gray Zone: From Land to Sea

Discussions of Russia's operations often refer to its "[gray zone](#)" approach to warfare. Defined as, "*Those covert or illegal activities of non-traditional statecraft that are below the threshold of armed organized violence; including disruption of order, political subversion of government or non-governmental organizations, psychological operations, abuse of legal processes, and financial corruption as part of an integrated design to achieve strategic advantage.*" In the Sea of Azov, there are already observed Russian gray zone methods in the maritime domain. Therefore, while the threat of a Russian land invasion should be considered, the threats facing Odessa – and the Ukrainian coastline writ large – likely will remain in the Sea. For several reasons, these incrementally disruptive hostilities, akin to ongoing naval tactics being employed by the Chinese in the South and East China Seas, should be Kyiv's greatest worry. **First**, an overt incursion on Odessa would necessarily involve Russia telegraphing the movement of its Black Sea Fleet – serving as host to a sizeable contingent of sea and land forces. Due to the augmented defensive capabilities installed by the Ukrainian military – its newly developed anti-ship "Neptune" cruise missile and modernized S-125 Neva/Pechora surface-to-air missile system – Kremlin strategists would likely advise against such a move. Although Ukraine's personnel and equipment in the region would not ensure victory over



a would-be invading Russian force, they provide the conventional deterrence required to allay concerns that Moscow believes it can quietly seize the region.

Route of Ukrainian vessels seized by Russian vessels in late 2018 near the Sea of Azov (BBC)

Second, despite doubts regarding open invasion, concerns abound that Russia may attempt similarly subversive activities in Odessa to what occurred in Crimea and throughout Donbas. The tactics used in the early years of the conflict – in annexing the Crimean Peninsula and creating the so-

called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics – were both geographically and demographically dependent and unlikely to be as successful if applied in western Ukraine. In Crimea, the Kremlin's "little green men" were able to assume control without widespread violence due to favorable conditions which do not exist in Odessa. The political environment on the peninsula, conducive for a Russian takeover, hosted a citizenry which was, for the most part, either emboldened by Russia's sudden presence, indifferent, or silenced by fear. Throughout Donbas, the disinformation campaign and political saboteurs were able to stoke the flames of discord required to launch the creation of the so-called autonomous republics. With Russian-backed separatists, private military contractors, and Russian regulars all taking part, control was effectively fractured from Ukraine's federal government. Geographically proximate to the Russian border, the Kremlin was able to either leverage the political environment preexisting in Crimea or, in the case of Donbas, fabricate one through its disinformation campaign, funding of separatist fighters, and covert transportation of Russian regulars across the border. According to a [2015 study](#) by the International Republican Institute, roughly 25 percent of Odessa's citizenry are ethnic Russians, with 78 percent citing Russian as the primary language spoken at home. The presence of ethnic Russians, often referred to as a fifth column – or minority group which can be leveraged – in Odessa has sparked concerns that a similar situation which unfolded in the east could be incited. However, the geographic conditions and element of surprise required are missing. Additionally important to note, the general political situation in the country was diametrically different to what it is today. When Crimea was annexed, and subsequent fighting in Donbas began, Ukraine's federal government was dysfunctional and divided. Following the Euromaidan protests and deposition of then-president Yanukovich, [several top officials](#) abandoned their posts. Among them were the Ministers of Defense and Internal Affairs, the commander of the Internal Troops of Ukraine, and the commander of the Ukrainian Navy in Crimea (who convinced over [5,000 Ukrainian sailors](#) to defect with him). Finally, one possible reason for escalations in the Sea of Azov – Russia's first major foray into the maritime environment against Ukraine – would be the Kremlin's decision that further subversion on land would be either impossible due to increased Ukrainian resilience, or inadvisable due to international backlash. Regardless, the fact Moscow has chosen to add this maritime component to continue its incrementally aggressive gray zone approach supports the argument that any activities to Ukraine's west – a "harder target" in military parlance – would similarly remain offshore.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet

Russia's Black Sea Fleet, after suffering two decades of decline following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has undergone more than a decade of serious reform, doubling its [offensive capabilities](#) since 2014. Prior to the annexation of Crimea, Russia had a [basing agreement](#) with the Ukrainian government. However, this agreement stipulated categorical limitations on personnel and equipment. Along with access to the port of Sevastopol, Moscow was allowed to garrison 25,000 troops, in addition to 132 armored combat vehicles, 22 military aircraft, and 24 pieces of artillery. In 2013, Russia was stationing 12,000 troops, zero tanks, 24 pieces of artillery, and 22 military aircraft. [By 2018](#), those numbers rose to 32,000 troops, 40 tanks, 174 pieces of artillery, and 113 military aircraft – in addition to S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems, Bastion and Bal coastal defense missile systems, and Iskander short-range ballistic missile systems. The Fleet, also host to several new advanced surface combatants and submarines – along with many warships transferred from the Caspian Sea Flotilla – is fulfilling the guiding principles highlighted in Russia's [2015 maritime doctrine](#): "In the Black and Azov Sea, the foundation of the National Maritime Policy is the accelerated modernization and comprehensive reinforcement of the strategic position of the Russian Federation." These tenets were [further discussed](#) in the 2017 *Naval Fundamentals* document, emphasizing improvement of combat capabilities and joint operability with other branches of the military in Crimea. Moscow's recent development of its Special Operations Forces (SSO) command is the most likely suspect to be used in a combined arms operation in the Black Sea. An example can be seen with the [oil derricks](#) near Odessa, which were illegally seized by special operations forces and are subsequently being guarded by several small warships – preventing any attempt by the Ukrainian military to retake them. While a less severe example, this low-risk operation represents one of many lessons for the Kremlin that this sort of incremental approach pays dividends. These "[stealth seizures](#)," i.e. annexation of Crimea, naval

blockade of the Sea of Azov, and the capture of the oil derricks are the hallmark of Russia's approach in the region but by their nature are limited in scope.

Area of Operations: The Black Sea

Unlike the proximate waters of the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea is busy with international activity and with all parties involved interested in keeping the sea lines open for trade and joint military cooperation. In addition to the western littoral states (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey), the navies of the United Kingdom and United States have operated in the Black Sea in recent months. The Royal Navy's **HMS Echo** entered the Black Sea and arrived at Odessa on 19 December, 2017. The UK's Defense Minister, Gavin Williamson, later announced joint exercises would take place with the Ukrainian Navy in early 2019. In early January, the **USS Fort McHenry (LSD-43)** made a regularly scheduled sail through the Black Sea. The **Fort McHenry**, an amphibious ship, equipped with defensively oriented weapons, was followed more recently by a visit to Georgia by the **USS Donald Cook (DDG-75)**, an *Arleigh Burke*-class guided-missile destroyer – sending a much more clear message to the Kremlin. Backing up this show of resolve, the U.S. announced it would send additional lethal aid to the Ukrainian military. While international presence in the region is a possible deterrent, many factors complicate the helpfulness of foreign vessels in the region. **First** and foremost, there is a perennial question mark in regard to what form(s) of Russian aggression will incite a Western response. And even then, showing diplomatic support of the situation is of little good to an embattled Ukrainian military. **Second**, the [Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits](#), an agreement signed in 1936, presents a logistical impossibility to an ever-present U.S. Navy in the Black Sea. The agreement stipulates that an aggregate tonnage of all non-Black Sea warships in the Black Sea cannot exceed 30,000 tons (or 45,000 tons under special conditions), and they are permitted to stay in the Black Sea for no longer than twenty-one days. Russia, undoubtedly monitoring the U.S. Navy's days at sea, could conceivably coordinate an operation during a lull of U.S. activity.

Defending Ukraine

The onus of defense, therefore, falls on the Ukrainian military. Prior to the aggressions in the Sea of Azov, for all intents and purposes the Ukrainian Navy lacked a coherent maritime doctrine within the overall military strategy. Suggested to have a "continental mindset," the greatest cause for concern is always from the next impending land invasion. The most recent example was the build-up of Russian forces in its Western Military District, from which came no invading force. Rather than an abnormal development, prior to the annexation of Crimea, roughly 40,000 troops were amassed on Ukraine's eastern border – used for purposes of intimidation and to mask subsequent asymmetric operations, rather than to be conventionally deployed. Despite these issues of threat assessment, the Ukrainian Navy has maintained steady success in developing itself into a competent fighting force, notwithstanding losing the majority of its assets during the annexation of Crimea. The guiding principle toward renewed maritime capacity building in the Ukrainian Navy can be seen in the "[mosquito fleet](#)" concept first proposed by Captain Andriy Ryzhenko, the Navy's deputy chief of staff for Euro-Atlantic integration. His idea is that despite budgetary pressures the navy should plan for "*near-term procurement of small, fast, low-signature, well-armed boats and craft for various purposes.*" The highly mobile proposed flotilla would serve well in the face of uncertainty presented by Russia's subversive maritime activities. [Toward this goal](#), the Ukrainian Navy plans to commission two *Gyurza*-class armored boats and two *Centaur*-class fast assault craft sometime in 2019, and to assume command of two U.S.-built Island-class patrol cutters this summer. These efforts toward naval capacity building are the key component of the "**New Strategy of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to 2035**," introduced by the Commander of the Naval Forces of Ukraine, Admiral Ihor Voronchenko in November 2018.

Moving Forward

As this gray zone approach continues to permeate the maritime environment, these aggressive asymmetric operations must remain an integral component of Ukraine's military calculus. They are incremental in their approach, and below the threshold of war in their character. For these reasons they will be difficult to predict, deter, and defend against. However, the Ukrainian military has been and will continue to undergo reform with these very tenets in mind. Analyzing the tactics used in the Sea of Azov by Russia, similar operations in the South and East China Seas by China, and how they may be adapted to fit the Black Sea is the most advantageous starting point toward an effective plan of defense. As the Ukrainian military remains resilient, and its allies supportive, the defense of Western ideals and international rule of law will come through the sober realization that these low-scale acts of force and subversive maneuvers are here to stay both within Ukraine's borders and off its coast.

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Source: <http://cimsec.org>

Australia's future maritime surveillance capability: it's not just about technology

27 Mar 2019 | [John Coyne](#) | [Home Affairs](#)

Over the past four years, Australia's border security framework has been subject to ongoing landmark overhauls. On 1 July 2015, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service were officially amalgamated into a single agency. At the same time, the Australian Border Force was stood up within the new department. Then, on 20 December 2017, with the ABF reforms still in progress, the Home Affairs portfolio and the Department of Home Affairs were established. Along with further professionalisation of the ABF, Home Affairs continued to innovate and introduce new technologies focused on maintaining the integrity of Australia's borders. In the absence of any obvious consolidation period, it's likely that many on the inside of the ABF are experiencing change fatigue. All the while, the

restructuring has generated volumes of public criticism. It's surprising, then, that precious little media attention was given to Home Affairs' subtle signalling in October 2018 that it would be making a once-in-50-years shake-up of Australia's civil maritime surveillance capabilities. Australia's current maritime surveillance arrangements are a product of slow evolution over five decades. Australia's maritime surveillance began in the late 1960s, using Royal Australian Air Force and Royal Australian Navy aircraft to patrol the newly declared 12-nautical-mile territorial sea. In August 1977, the Australian government announced its intention to declare a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone around the continent. With a growing need for aerial surveillance, the combined military and civil surveillance commitment was boosted to 27,000 flight hours per year. A substantial part of the increase came from the use of chartered civilian aircraft.



Image courtesy of the [Australian Border Force](#).

By the late 1990s, the contracted civil maritime surveillance effort had progressed from a group of binocular-armed observers to encompass a cohesive fleet of contractor-supplied and -operated, purpose-modified aircraft, using modern search radar and communications systems and mature procedures originally adapted from the military maritime surveillance world. Since then, civil contractors have provided around 95% of our civil maritime surveillance. Last year, the Department of Home Affairs initiated the [‘future maritime surveillance capability’](#) project. The aims are to *‘provide the next generation maritime surveillance capability to counter current and emerging civil maritime threats to Australia ... [and] provide surveillance capabilities that enable timely and effective deterrence, prevention and response operations to protect Australia’s borders and exercise sovereign rights’*. Home Affairs released a [request for information](#) to the market asking for ‘information on product solutions, indicative costings and potential suppliers’ and offering ‘an opportunity for industry to brief the Department on innovative options to achieve the project outcomes’. Over the last decade alone, there have been dramatic developments in maritime surveillance technologies and their affordability. From small cube satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to artificial intelligence and swarm technology, the options for Australia are almost limitless. However, in delivering the project, Home Affairs ought to be mindful that a comprehensive maritime border security strategy depends as much on a multi-stage process as on technology. The surveillance process starts with detecting potential threats and finishes with disruption operations. Just as importantly, every surveillance capability has strengths and weaknesses that vary depending on the specific surveillance stage. Searching involves surveying an area using active or passive technical or non-technical means. The aim is to identify anomalous behaviour in Australian waters. Effective searching involves using a mix of sensor types across the search area and integrating the different data feeds to produce a comprehensive picture of the situation so that other surveillance or response assets can be cued effectively. Detection is the moment when an object or vessel is discovered. It's achieved through one or more technical (active radar or satellite) sensors, visual detection or self-reporting. The level of security risk assigned to a detected vessel depends on several factors. Obtaining information about a vessel, such as its country of origin and any previous offences, assists border protection authorities to make further judgements and determine the level of urgency of the case. The capability to track a vessel has several applications. Accurate tracking enables authorities to determine the vessel's direction and possible destination, which may further elucidate the threat posed. If necessary, it also informs the planning of an interception at sea or on land. Each step of the process contributes to assessing whether a vessel needs to be intercepted, disrupted, or both, by a navy vessel or an ABF patrol boat. If the vessel is involved in an illegal activity, the interception or interdiction itself may disrupt that activity. This process requires a manned patrol boat so that authorised personnel can board and inspect a vessel. Ultimately, the aim of all of this activity is to increase decision-makers' understanding of maritime risks and threats by layering information and intelligence collected from space, air, surface and subsurface assets to provide a rich picture of activity at sea that can be further analysed to identify threats. With high staff turnover, and the rise of the public service generalist, both Home Affairs and the ABF will need to be careful that the allure of technology doesn't get in the way of getting the capability mix right.

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Source: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au>

ANAO expresses concerns for Anzac Class sustainment program

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has released its report into the sustainment arrangements the Royal Australian Navy has put in place for the fleet of Anzac Class frigates.

01 APRIL 2019.

An audit of the sustainment program was ordered due to the "cost and the importance of this capability until the Hunter Class frigates enter into service", with the RAN using 15 per cent of its overall sustainment budget for the year on the Anzac Class, at a cost of \$374 million. ANAO's findings expressed concerns that "Defence cannot demonstrate the efficiency or outcomes of its sustainment arrangements, as the necessary performance information has not been captured," as well as revealing that Defence has been aware since 2012 that "sustainment arrangements have not kept pace with higher than expected operational usage". "The Anzac Class Product Delivery Schedule in Navy's Materiel Sustainment Agreement



established with the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group is not fit-for-purpose," the report said. "Navy has not updated the document to reflect the current governance arrangements and sustainment needs. The current sustainment plan and available budget do not accurately reflect the operational use of the frigates, which is higher than planned." ANAO released the following recommendations for the sustainment program, which Defence agreed to undertake, some pending qualification.

- Defence update the Anzac

Class Product Delivery Schedule of the Navy Materiel Sustainment Agreement to align sustainment plans for the Anzac Class frigates with their operational use and material condition;

- In the context of developing its transition plan for the Anzac Class life-of-type extension, Defence review the capital and sustainment funding required to maintain the Anzac Class frigate capability until 2043, and advise the government of the funding required to meet the government's capability requirements for the class or the capability trade-offs to be made;
- Defence review the key performance measures for the Anzac Class frigates' sustainment to ensure they are reliable and complete;
- To align with the strategic planning approach outlined in the Defence Integrated Investment Program, Defence develop guidance in the Capability Life Cycle Manual on when a proposal to establish or amend a sustainment program should be provided to the Defence Investment Committee and the Minister for Finance for consideration; and
- Defence refine its performance reporting and management arrangements for the Anzac Class frigates by aligning key performance indicators in the Warship Asset Management Agreement and those in the Anzac Class Product Delivery Schedule of the Navy Materiel Sustainment Agreement. ANAO also released a summary of the Department of Defence's response - "Defence welcomes the ANAO Audit Report into the Anzac Class Frigates - Sustainment and agrees with the recommendations. Recommendations three and four have been agreed with qualifications.

"Defence would like to highlight the reliable performance and operational effectiveness of the Anzac Class Frigates, and their ability to consistently achieve whole of government requirements during the previous two decades. Throughout the life of the Anzac Class Frigates, Defence has effectively managed upgrades and subsequent sustainment of these warships in order to achieve the strategic requirements that have evolved since the introduction of the capability. "Defence is confident the assurance provided through this Seaworthiness regime affirms the warships are operational, seaworthy and capable of performing all assigned tasks. Furthermore, Defence is continually assessing options to optimise sustainment funding for the Anzac Class Frigates to ensure operational availability and effectiveness continues to be met. "The Warship Asset Management Agreement (WAMA) has seen the implementation of greater cost oversight and improved performance-based measures that encourage collaborative behaviours and a solutions focus within the industry partners. In line with the First Principles Review, the WAMA seeks to support long term relationships with industry that will underpin the sovereign capabilities essential to deliver continuous shipbuilding and sustainment. "Defence is actively planning and making preparations for the transition from the Anzac Class Frigates to the Hunter Class Frigates to ensure effective operational coverage in a complex and ever changing strategic environment."

Source: Defence Connect

Sicker and sicker: Two more sailors fall ill on USN Ship quarantined at sea

Two more sailors on the **USS Fort McHenry** have come down with viral parotitis, an infection with symptoms similar to mumps, bringing the total number of sailors infected to 27, the US Navy told Business Insider in a statement. The stricken ship has been quarantined at sea for months now as doctors work to control and understand the outbreak. The first case of



the infection was spotted December 22, not long after the ship left Mayport Naval Station in Florida for its deployment in the Persian Gulf. It has avoided port calls since early January. The Navy says that none of the infections were serious or life-threatening, and 26 of the 27 service members have recovered and returned to duty. According to Vaxopedia, mumps is one of the infectious diseases that members of the US armed forces are

vaccinated against when they join a branch of service. The Navy, in an abundance of caution, also gave the more than 700 service members on board booster vaccinations for measles, mumps and rubella, the common triple-vaccine combination. The Fifth Fleet, however, noted that the mumps portion of that vaccine is the least effective, "*providing 88 percent effectiveness after completion of the two dose series,*" it said in its statement to Business Insider. How this outbreak happened remains a mystery. "*The point of origin has not yet been determined,*" the Fifth Fleet told the outlet. The Navy and Marines have launched an epidemiologic investigation into the outbreak; the investigation is still ongoing. The close quarters of Navy ships, of course, provide ample opportunities for infections to spread. How long the ship will remain at sea is also unknown, as the service will not consider the outbreak over until two incubation cycles have passed without a new infection. The mumps incubation cycle is 25 days, so it will be nearly two months at the very earliest before the **USS Fort McHenry** returns to shore.

Source: Sputnik



TADJOURA, Djibouti (March 30, 2019) U.S. Navy tactical patrol boats assigned to Commander, Task Group (CTG) 68.6 from Camp Lemonnier, provide security to the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler **USNS Tippecanoe (T-AO 199)** as it departs the Port of Djibouti, March 30, 2019. Camp Lemonnier is an operational installation that enables U.S., allied and partner nation forces to be where and when they are needed to ensure security in Europe, Africa and Southwest Asia. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Shannon D. Barnwell/Released)