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The great wharf from China, raising eyebrows across the Pacific

DAVID WROE

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Vanuatu's Luganville wharf captured in August 9, 2015 and just ahead of its completion in April 27, 2016. A Beijing-funded wharf in Vanuatu that is struggling to make money is big enough to allow powerful warships to dock alongside it, heightening fears the port could be converted into a Chinese naval installation. *The Age* inspected the \$114 million Luganville wharf on Wednesday and was told US coastguard officials and Marines recently visited the sprawling facility and took a keen interest in its specifications. Some defence experts have warned the wharf, which is now the largest in the South Pacific and strategically located in the same harbour in which the US based tens of thousands of troops during World War II, has been built with the option of converting it in the future to a naval base. It has been revealed that Beijing is looking to establish a permanent military presence on Vanuatu. The Chinese and Vanuatu governments have strenuously denied they have discussed a military base, though multiple senior sources say Australian national security officials have been aware of the



overtures for some time, and are deeply concerned.

THE AGE

The wharf is now big enough to accommodate destroyers from the Chinese navy. Luganville harbour master Terry Ngwele said US officials had recently visited the 360-metre long wharf. The coastguard

make yearly inspections of wharfs that are certified to take international cruise liners. But on this visit, they were accompanied by US Marines. "[In] February, we had US coastguard and the Marines based in Japan ... They asked me about the depth and I told them it was 25 metres. They said, 'Wow, this can accommodate a US aircraft carrier.'" The business case for the wharf's redevelopment was based on tourism from cruise ships, and from turning the port into a transit hub for container ships. But neither revenue source is meeting expectations. According to shipping tracking service FleetMon, only four cruise ships have docked at Luganville this year, though Ngwele said the figure was seven. The wharf was getting two or three container ships a week, he said, though it can take two at a time and container ships on average stay about one day to offload cargo. Phillip Ryan, the chief executive officer of the wharf's stevedoring firm NISCOL, said he believed the business case was fundamentally viable. But he acknowledged neither side of the business was meeting expectations. "There's not much here to really excite passengers getting off the ship to wander around," he said. "The investment in cruise ships hasn't panned out the way they would have liked it. That's a pure and simple fact. "The cruise liners have moved away to other ports. "It's just not working out at this point in time." The Vanuatu government has taken on significant debt to China, though it appears to have stopped taking large loans since getting a stern warning from the International Monetary Fund in 2016. The wharf was constructed by the Shanghai Construction Company and opened with fanfare in the middle of last year. The Chinese ambassador, Liu Quan, reportedly handed keys to Vanuatu's Prime Minister Charlot Salwai during a ribbon cutting ceremony. "This miracle project is testimony to the Chinese companies that they have the highest engineering knowhow and technologies, and the most important of all is that once they commit, they honour their commitment and deliver in time and quality," the ambassador reportedly said. It is unclear whether the wharf loan contract with the Vanuatu government includes a so-called debt-equity swap clause, which would mean China could take over the facility if Vanuatu defaults on its payments. It has recently taken over the major port of Hambantota from Sri Lanka in these circumstances. A Vanuatu Finance Department official, Letlet August, declined by email to answer questions on this or to provide the loan agreement. Malcolm Davis, a defence expert at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said it was "not by accident" that wharf had been built for large vessels. "My guess is there's a Trojan horse operation here that eventually will set up a large facility that is very modern and very well-equipped. "They've done this before in other parts of the world. "Their hope is that the debt of the Vanuatu government will be so onerous that they can't pay it back. The Chinese will say, 'the facility is ours for 99 years' and the next thing you've got a PLA Navy Luang III class [destroyer] docking there. "Clearly the Chinese are serious about establishing a military base in the Pacific and that fundamentally changes our strategic circumstances." Lowy Institute Pacific expert Jonathan Pryke said the Luganville wharf project was the "stand-out one for potential dual use ... of all the work the Chinese are doing in the South Pacific" - referring to a facility that can be turned from a civil into a military installation. His Lowy colleague Euan Graham, an expert in international

security, said such a facility "fits the modus operandi elsewhere" and noted China was also involved in the upgrade of a nearby airport, though that is being funded by the World Bank. He said there was "no obvious economic case" for China to be building a military presence in the South Pacific and "that shortens the odds of a strategic motive". But James Goldrick, a former navy officer and now military scholar, said a lengthened wharf didn't itself indicate military intent because most naval ships didn't actually need that much room. "A wharf on its own doesn't mean that much unless you've got facilities to do deep maintenance, supply facilities, the ability to refuel," he said. Ryan, a former Royal Australian Navy sailor with 20 years' service, said he did not believe Luganville would become a Chinese naval base. "What you will see is there'll be an increase in diplomatic missions from Chinese navy coming down ... flying the Chinese flag." He said the commercial performance of the wharf might improve next year. Cargo movements were also down because prices for the major island exports copra and cocoa had fallen and demand for imported goods among locals had fallen. He backed the case that Luganville could become a container ship hub with ships from South Korea and Singapore offloading their cargo to be picked up by smaller ships and delivered around the Pacific islands. But he added that the Vanuatu government needed to "get out into the marketplace and find out where our trade routes are where we can go". "Sending out one or two containers of cocoa is not going to make this country money ... Government needs to get their fingers out of their ears and get going on that because nobody else can do it."

Source: <https://www.stuff.co.nz>

Exactly my sentiment.

Claims China wants Vanuatu wharf for a naval base

There is a furore in Australia over concerns China is aiming to make a huge wharf it has built at Luganville in Vanuatu a naval base. According to Fairfax media in Australia there have been reports that China has discussed with Vanuatu using the new 360 metre wharf at Luganville as a naval base. The wharf was built by a Chinese company funded by a soft loan from China. Don Wiseman spoke with the director of the Lowy Institute's Pacific programme, Jonathan Pryke, and began by asking him if there is any credence in the report that China is chasing this naval base in Vanuatu.

Transcript

JONATHAN PRYKE: That's a tough question to answer because the reports we have seen coming out of Fairfax media today are from sources within the Australia Government, or within Canberra, that Beijing's plans could ultimately lead to a military or naval base in Vanuatu. So there is a still quite a degree of speculation into how far this conversation has actually gone between China and Vanuatu. Clearly the objective here is to try and get more clarity on far these conversations are going, to try and get the Australian Government and partners in the region to talk to the Vanuatu Government or have a hard conversation and try and get the Vanuatu Government to refute any potential of this happening in the future. Clearly having a naval base in our back yard or our immediate neighbourhood, it would be quite distressing for officials in Canberra. DON WISEMAN: Yes but of course a long wharf doesn't make a naval base does it? if you have one or two ships tie up there at odd times does that make it a naval base?

JP: yeah that's a great question. The objective of this wharf from the outset has been to develop tourism on Vanuatu's largest island to enable larger cruise ships to come more regularly to that island. There were questions from the outset 'was this much investment needed' but there is the counter argument that well once you build it people will come. We are trying to put the assets in there so we can develop more tourism potential for that island. So there is definitely an economic imperative for having this wharf. Should it have been this big, it is very hard for me to say. But certainly from the intelligence side of things, or the security side of things, when you look at this you look at it as being a potential military asset. JP: That's right. It's a \$US55 million dollar that has built this. A Chinese contractor has built the wharf. In fact the wharf wasn't built up to a standard that the Vanuatu Government expects, so the Chinese Government had to come in, at their own cost, and rehabilitate this newly built wharf. So there are issues around the effectiveness of these sorts of projects in the Pacific, but this is real status quo work of China - throughout the world really. They engage in their aid and development through loans of some degree of concessionality, and then they have Chinese contractors implement these loans and it gives them a nice bit of economic leverage over these countries, with this massive debt that they incur, and that can be used in the future, or not, as economic leverage. It is an ongoing conversation in the Pacific how strategic China has been with its engagement in the Pacific region. China has given about \$1.8 billion dollars in a mixture of grants and loans to the Pacific, from 2006 to 2016, which makes it a significant donor in the region, but how much strategy has come behind that, or how much it's part of a bottom up, organic part of a global reach from China - it's a difficult one to answer. DW: You would certainly be expecting, at this point, that there will be a lot of pressure coming from Canberra on Port Vila to ensure the Chinese don't make use of this wharf. JP: I would have to think that yes I am sure conversations have been had and conversations are continuing to be had with Vanuatu. Foreign Minister Bishop was on ABC radio just re-affirming that she was confident that Australia is the key strategic partner of Vanuatu and the broader Pacific, but it is not just about having hard conversations. We need to keep upping our game. We are trying to do the step change in the Pacific but we need to have a re-engagement or re-concentration of effort to build these relationships and to show the Pacific that the region is critically important to us. DW: Vanuatu of course is not the first place where we understand China has had discussions about a possible naval base. There's been Fiji, there's been suggestions that Tonga, which is in hock to China for a large amount has also been approached, but what is the attraction, really, for China in having a base down here? JP: That's a great question. China clearly is interested in expanding its sphere of influence in Asia and the broader Pacific, but as its objectives in coming this far south, this far into Australia and New Zealand's neighbourhood, and the Pacific neighbourhood, it's a great question and

one that I am sure people in Canberra will spend a lot of time trying to figure out. China is clearly playing a very long game here but if this is true and they are actively pursuing a naval base in this part of the world it could have - it's a risky one, because this could a potential red line that Australia, New Zealand and the United States are not prepared to let China cross.

source: radionz

Enough said!

HMS Sutherland arrives in Japan in effort to curb North Korea's evasion of sanctions



HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Sutherland and HMS Iron Duke Credit: Royal Navy

[Julian Ryall](#)

12 April 2018 • 12:02am

The Royal Navy's **HMS Sutherland** docked in the Japanese port of Yokosuka on Wednesday morning and will take part in operations to combat efforts by North Korea to get around United Nations

sanctions of banned commodities, including fuel and components for the regime's nuclear and long-range missile programmes. Satellites and maritime patrol aircraft have in recent months identified a number of [ship-to-ship transfers](#) being conducted at sea between North Korean freighters and vessels flying other flags. Royal Navy vessels will now be involved in monitoring and potentially interdicting such activities, using Wildcat helicopters and state-of-the-art radar systems. **HMS Sutherland** is the first of three Royal Navy warships that will visit Japan and other ports in the region before the end of the year in order to enforce UN sanctions, [conduct freedom of navigation operations](#) and take part in a series of exercises with the UK's allies in the region. "Our armed forces are at the forefront of Global Britain and the deployment of **HMS Albion**, **Sutherland** and **Argyll** demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our international responsibilities and to maintaining peace, security and prosperity in the region", said Gavin Williamson, the defence secretary. "Until North Korea matches its words with concrete actions, the UK will continue working closely with partners and allies to keep up pressure and strictly

enforce existing sanctions, ensuring not only regional security but that of the UK as well," he said.



HMS Albion will arrive in the region later this year Credit: PA

Mark Field, the minister for the Asia-Pacific region, is presently visiting Tokyo and said the deployment of three Royal Navy ships to Japan highlights the UK's commitment to the security of the region, adding that British

ground troops will for the first time take part in exercises with Japanese forces here in the autumn. "The relationship between the Maritime Self-Defence Force and the Royal Navy is becoming increasingly close and these joint exercises have been planned to improve interoperability and friendship between our forces", Mr Field said. The UK "supports the diplomatic approach by our allies and partners in Japan", he said, but is also committed to enforcing UN Security Council sanctions on the North. **HMS Sutherland** will take part in anti-submarine exercises with Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Forces in the coming weeks before **HMS Albion** - an amphibious transport ship complete with a unit of Royal Marine Commandos - arrives later in the year for landing exercises. **HMS Argyll**, another Type 23 frigate, [is scheduled to conduct operations in the region next winter](#). As well as countering North Korea, the Royal Navy warships will conduct freedom of navigation operations in waters in the South China Sea, close to uninhabited atolls that have been unilaterally claimed by Beijing and turned into islands with extensive military fortifications. Captain Paul Casson, the defence attache at the British Embassy in Tokyo, declined to reveal the details of the vessels' routes for operational reasons, but did confirm that the

Royal Navy ships would “demonstrate the UK’s commitment to regional stability, international law and the United Nations Law of the Sea”.

Source: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk>

Severnaya Verf shipyard delivers LSV *Elbrus* to RF Navy

On 2 April 2018, RF Navy approved the state commission’s acceptance certificate on completion of official tests of logistics support vessel (LSV) ***Elbrus*** (Project 23120). According to the shipyard’s press center, the ceremony of hoisting the flag of RF Navy’s auxiliary fleet was held on April 9. The Project 23120 series vessels feature versatility, capable of performing a wide range of tasks: the transport of cargo, including ship-to-ship transfer of supplies on the high seas; towing operations; escort of ships performing combat missions; salvage and rescue of stricken ships and seafarers; seabed survey and mapping. The ***Elbrus*** hull was built to ARC4 class to sail in 0.6-meter-thick ice. General characteristics: LOA - 95 m; Beam - 22 m; Draft - 9 m; Speed - 18 knots, Displacement – 9,500 tonnes; Cruising range – 5,000 nm; Endurance - about 60 days; Complement – 27. The ship will be fitted with a DPS, two 50-tonne electro-hydraulic cranes, towing winches with towing force of 120 and 25 tonnes, a decompression chamber and firefighting equipment. ***LSV Elbrus*** will be able to perform loading operations at undeveloped berthing facilities and in the open sea. Severnaya Verf shipyard is currently building yet another vessel of the project, ***LSV Vsevolod Bobrov*** OJSC "Severnaya Verf" Shipyard (corporate member of United Shipbuilding Corporation) is among the leading shipbuilding companies of Russia’s defence industry. The company was founded on November 14, 1912, as "Putilovskaya Shipyard." Since that time the shipyard has built more than 600 warships and commercial vessels including missile cruisers, anti-aircraft ships, antisubmarine ships, destroyers, passenger ships, bulk carriers, container carriers, Ro-Ro ships, tugboats, support ships, ferries and floating docks. The shipyard’s backlog of orders currently includes the series of frigates, corvettes and other vessels.

source: **Portnews**

Big E is officially inactivated, but will stick around



Retired aircraft carrier ***Enterprise CVN-65*** rests at pier side at Newport News Shipyard on April 9, 2018. The completed deactivation of the former ***USS Enterprise*** was confirmed Monday by officials at the Sea-Air-Space 2018 exposition in National Harbor, Md.

The Navy and Newport News Shipbuilding have officially pulled the plug on the world’s first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, ending a painstaking, never-before-done

process that began several years ago. The completed inactivation of the former ***USS Enterprise*** was confirmed Monday by officials at the Sea-Air-Space 2018 exposition in National Harbor, Md. However, the ship won’t be leaving the area anytime soon. It is expected to remain at Newport News until 2021, possibly longer, while the Navy assesses the environmental impact of disposal options, said Capt. John Markowicz of Naval Sea Systems Command. Several scenarios remain on the table, Markowicz said. The ship could be towed to Puget Sound, where other nuclear vessels have been disposed. But it could also be handled commercially. The shipyard completed its base contract work on ***Enterprise*** in December. The government recently finalized its review and certification of the paperwork. The Newport News yard, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, is the nation’s sole designer, builder and refueler of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. ***Enterprise*** is the only ship of its class and served the country for 51 years. It defended the nation’s interests from the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and was the forerunner of the Nimitz-class ships that now make up the bulk of the carrier fleet. ***Enterprise*** completed its final combat deployment in 2012. It was towed from Naval Station Norfolk to the Newport News shipyard in June 2013. The deactivation process required more than 1,000 shipbuilders who defueled ***Enterprise***’s eight nuclear reactors, inactivated its propulsion systems and prepared its hull for final tow. Shipbuilders are currently doing advance work on the newest ***Enterprise***, which will be the third carrier in the Gerald R. Ford class. The ***USS Enterprise*** was the world’s first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. The Big E was decommissioned on Friday, Feb. 3, 2017 at Newport News Shipbuilding. The ceremony took place nearly 59 years to the day from its keel-laying on Feb. 4, 1958

source : **Daily Press**

Indonesia prepares to receive second Nagapasa-class submarine

Ridzwan Rahmat, Singapore

The Indonesian Navy is preparing to bring its second South Korean-built submarine home. Service is on track to operate a class of two boats by 2018, with a third under construction in Surabaya. A pioneering crew for the Indonesian Navy (Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Angkatan Laut, or TNI-AL’s) second Nagapasa (Type 209/1400)-class diesel-electric submarine (SSK) has arrived in South Korea to prepare the boat for its journey home. The SSK, which will be in service as ***KRI Ardadedali*** with pennant number 404 once commissioned, will begin the journey home from Okpo, on the South Korean island of Geoje, towards Surabaya on 23 April, said the TNI-AL.

source : **Jane’s Navy International**



The *Ngoola Kilaung* moored in the port of Luanda Photo : Hermann Hazenberg ©

Indonesia selects electronic, anti-submarine warfare suite from Thales for Martadinata frigates

by : Ridzwan Rahmat, Singapore

- Indonesia has selected electronic and anti-submarine warfare sensors from Thales for its SIGMA 10514 warships
- Equipment will bolster the platform's role as an all-round major surface combatant

The Indonesian Navy's (Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Angkatan Laut, or TNI-AL's) Martadinata-class frigates have been equipped with the Scorpion 2, and the Vigile 100 radar electronic countermeasure, and support systems from Thales as part of its electronic warfare suite. The TNI-AL currently operates a fleet of two ships in the class, which has been built according to Damen Schelde's SIGMA 10514 design. Lead ship **KRI Raden Eddy Martadinata (331)** was commissioned in April 2017 while its sister vessel, **KRI I Gusti Ngurah Rai (332)** was inducted in January 2018. The Scorpion 2 has been designed to counter target acquisition radars and missiles with active radar homing guidance methods. The system employs a steerable dual-head transmitter unit, and operates in the 7.5 to 18 GHz frequency. According to a product literature from Thales, the system can handle up to two threats simultaneously. Meanwhile the Vigile 100 employs between four and six direction-finding antennas around the platform's mast to locate and identify potential hazards. The system operates in the 2–18 GHz range, and works in tandem with the Scorpion 2 system to provide the platform with area and self-defence capabilities against radar and electronic threats. Besides the radar electronic warfare equipment, Jane's has also received confirmation from an Indonesian industry source that the Martadinata frigates have been equipped with the CAPTAS-2/UMS 4229 variable depth sonar (VDS) from Thales. This is in addition to the Kingklip/UMS 4132 hull-mounted sonar from the same company.

source : Jane's Navy International

USS Dallas Decommissions after 38 Years of Service



Sailors and guests bid farewell to the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine **USS Dallas (SSN 700)** during a decommissioning ceremony April 4, 2018 in the controlled industrial area (CIA) at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) Bremerton, Washington. The decommissioning ceremony, a time-honored naval tradition, retires a ship from service through a variety of ceremonial observances, including the department heads' final reports, the lowering of the ship's commissioning pennant, and Sailors walking off the ship for the final time. The ceremony is held to honor the ship and all the Sailors

who have honorably served as the crew. Cmdr. Brian Freck, deputy commodore, Submarine Squadron 19, was the guest speaker for the decommissioning and he put into context the famous ship's place in history during her 38 years of service. "We are here to say farewell to a work horse in the defense of our nation, **USS Dallas**," said Freck. "To this day, **Dallas** is still the most famous submarine in the U.S. Navy, because she was the star of the best-selling novel, **'The Hunt for Red October'**. Although many of the real stories remain classified, there are other great stories, which she starred in, that are actually true. I can say that she superbly conducted countless missions of vital importance to the United States and our allies." Decommissioning a submarine is a major undertaking that relies on teamwork. Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance facility led the team. "Professional warfighters come together with a huge organization of exceptional technical expertise and capabilities to shut down, dismantle and render safe all the systems and equipment which gave that vessel its lethality," said Cmdr. David Kaiser, Dallas' final commanding officer. "We built a critical, questioning, proactive team that has met or exceeded all expectations." The Navy is committed to preserving the readiness

of the forces deploying. As the aging Los Angeles-class boats are stricken from the Naval Vessel Registry, the way is made for newer, more advanced submarines. "Today, we have reached that point in the inactivation where the benefit of retaining the active duty Dallas Sailors no longer justifies the cost and burden on the operational fleet from where we came," said Kaiser. "Today marks the end of ship's force involvement. It is time for us, the crew, to return to the fleet as the **Dallas** legacy in order to help ensure that our submarine force is ready to be first in harm's way." **Dallas** carried out missions vital to national security, deployed 14 times, steamed over one million miles and visited over 30 countries. Dallas completed their most recent deployment November 22, 2016. During their final extended 7-month deployment to the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet Areas of Operation, the submarine traveled 37,000 nautical miles and made port calls to Brest, France, Al Hidd, Bahrain, and Duqm, Oman. **Dallas** was the second ship of the United States Navy to be named for Dallas, Texas. The keel was laid by the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics in Groton, Conn., October 9, 1976. The boat was launched April 28, 1979, and commissioned July 18, 1981. **Dallas** received two Meritorious Unit Commendations, two Navy Unit Commendations and was awarded the Battle Efficiency "E" in 1986, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2000 and 2013. Measuring more than 360 feet long and displacing more than 6,900 tons, **Dallas** had a crew of approximately 140 Sailors. **Dallas** was capable of supporting various missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike warfare and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Source: DVIDS

These submarines cost a lot of money to build and fit out, but they do give exceptional service.

Navy's Oldest Commissioned Submarine Visits Pearl Harbor for Final Time

Friends and families of the crew gathered on the April 6 to welcome back the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS **Bremerton** as it returned from its final deployment.



Bremerton successfully completed a six-month deployment while conducting operations in support of national security. "The entire crew performed with excellence," said Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Wade Jacobson, Bremerton's boat chief. "In six months we took the nation's longest-serving submarine more than **42,000 nautical miles**, executing multiple missions in some of the toughest and busiest environments in the world, and conducted five foreign port visits." During the deployment, 25 sailors earned their submarine warfare qualification, and 19 achieved advanced supervisory qualifications. "I want the American public to know that they should be incredibly proud of every single person on this boat," Jacobson said. "Each one has sacrificed something to do the job, and it can sometimes be stressful, but through grit and determination, each one has come through successfully. The completion of its Western Pacific deployment marks the end the ship's active service in the Pacific. It will soon head to Bremerton, Washington, for deactivation. "The **Bremerton** is one of the most impressive engineering marvels in human history," Jacobson said. "It is truly incredible for a warship to be operational at such deep and strenuous depths for nearly 40 years." **Bremerton** made port calls to Singapore and the Philippines, and some of the crew used the visits to volunteer and interact with host countries. "The best part of deployment for me was getting the chance to play soccer with children we visited in the Philippines," said Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Daniel Kim. "It was a great opportunity to see and interact with the local community."

Jacobson extolled the crew for its flexibility during the challenging deployment. "Every curveball thrown our way was hit out of the park," he said. **USS Bremerton** is the 10th ship of the Los Angeles class and the oldest commissioned submarine in the Navy. Its keel was laid in Groton, Connecticut, in May 1976. source: US department of Defense

The Navy wants just one littoral combat ship this year, but it may get three

by Travis J. Tritten

The LCS will cost about \$450 million to \$650 million per ship, meaning the price tag could top \$1 billion if Congress adds two more ships. Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer and other service brass were on Capitol Hill last month defending their plan to buy just one littoral combat ship in the coming fiscal year. Unsurprisingly, the plan has rankled House members from states that build the small surface warship and has triggered warnings of layoffs from two of the Navy's commercial shipyards. A single LCS purchase would not provide enough work and cause the shipyards in Alabama and Wisconsin to "crumble on us" and become "effectively crippled," Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Ala., whose district includes the Austal USA facility in Mobile that builds the Independence LCS variant, told Navy officials. But the controversy may be short-lived. Analysts say Congress almost certainly will add one or two more of the ships into the Navy's upcoming 2019 budget despite its request, much as it did last year. "The 2019 LCS shortfall is likely to take care of itself from a congressional shipbuilding plus-up perspective," said Jim McAleese, the founder of McAleese and Associates, a government contracts consulting and legal firm. The LCS made its debut in 2008 as a kind of experiment in quickly building affordable craft to patrol coastal

waters. The results were mixed, and the ships were dogged by mechanical problems, performance issues, and criticism from lawmakers. The Navy is now focused on ending the program and buying a replacement guided-missile frigate in the next couple of years. "As we examine the needs of the Navy, not just today but also in the future, to assure that we maintain our historical dominance on the seas, a mixed fleet of both LCSs and new frigates will be best suited for the service to defend against growing threats — especially from China," said Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. But the Navy is under pressure to keep the Mobile shipyard and a shipyard in Marinette, Wis., where Lockheed Martin builds its Freedom LCS variant, humming until the orders for the new ship design are put in. The LCS will cost about \$450 million to \$650 million per ship, according to McAleese, meaning the price tag could top \$1 billion if Congress adds two more ships. Last year, the White House proposed a single LCS purchase but then quickly amended its request by adding another ship under similar pressure. Congress ended up giving the Navy three of the ships. Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., who is chairman of the House Armed Services seapower subcommittee, is the top advocate in the chamber for a bigger Navy and supports the shipyards' call for more than a single LCS purchase. "I believe it is imperative that we support the minimum sustaining rate for the current Littoral Combat Ship production shipyards until we can transition to the frigate-class ships," Wittman said. Both the shipyards and the Navy have pointed to a total of three LCSs per year as the production rate needed to keep workers and facilities busy. The service acknowledged to the Washington Examiner that the single-ship order for 2019 would mean that "both yards will be operating below the full capacity of their facilities. Combat on the seas is changing and becoming more complex, and the Navy is focused on getting the new frigate with "improved lethality and survivability" compared to the LCS, according to Lt. Lauren Chatmas, a Navy spokeswoman. The Navy awarded five conceptual design contracts for the new frigate in February and plans to award a construction contract in fiscal 2020, according to Chatmas. Still, Spencer defended the 2019 LCS purchase as a "good sustaining rate" for the yards during his March testimony to the House Appropriations Committee, which would have to fund any purchase. But it would leave workers in Alabama and Wisconsin idle and create a financial lull that would be hard for the two small shipyards to absorb, said Thomas Callender, senior research fellow for defense programs at the Heritage Foundation. "If we go to one ship, likely both of them would be reducing their workforce," Callender said.

source: [washingtonexaminer](#)

Whether we like it or not, building warships is creating much work in an industry that battles to keep a well-stocked order book.

Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group to Depart for Deployment



NORFOLK, Va. (NNS) -- Nearly 6,500 Sailors of the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) will depart Norfolk the morning of April 11, for a regularly-scheduled deployment. Deploying ships and aircraft of the strike group, commanded by Rear Adm Gene Black, include flagship **USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75)**, commanded by Capt. Nick Dienna; the nine squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1; guided-missile cruiser **USS Normandy (CG 60)**; and guided-missile destroyers of Destroyer Squadron Two Eight (DESRON 28), including **USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51)**, **USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)**, **USS**

Forrest Sherman (DDG 98), and **USS Farragut (DDG 99)**. The Sachsen-class German frigate **FGS Hessen (F 221)** is also operating as part of the strike group during the first half of the deployment. Guided-missile destroyers **USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109)** and **USS The Sullivans (DDG 68)** are slated to deploy from their homeports and re-join the strike group at a future date. Squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1, commanded by Capt. John Perrone, embarked on **Truman** include Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 11 "Red Rippers;" VFA-211 "Checkmates;" VFA-81 "Sunliners;" VFA-136 "Knighthawks;" Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 137 "Rooks;" Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 126 "Seahawks;" Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 72 "Proud Warriors;" Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 11 "Dragon Slayers;" and a detachment from Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 "Rawhides." While deployed, the strike group will operate in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of responsibility conducting maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts alongside allies and partners. The deployment is part of a regular rotation of forces to provide crisis response capability and increase theater security cooperation and forward naval presence in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operation.

Source: [Navy News Service](#)

Indian Coast Guard commissions patrol vessel ICGS Vikram

The Indian Coast Guard commissioned the lead ship of a new class of offshore patrol vessels, **ICGS Vikram**, in a ceremony at L&T's Defence shipyard at Kattupalli, near Chennai, on 11 April. **Vikram** is the first of seven vessels in the class designed and built by Larsen and Toubro under a contract from March 2015. The keel for **ICGS Vikram** was laid in March 2016, meaning the vessel was built, tested and delivered in 25 months, according to the shipbuilder. "It is a momentous occasion

for L&T to become the first private Indian shipyard to deliver an in-house designed offshore patrol vessel to MoD," Larsen & Toubro CEO and managing director S.N. Subrahmanyam said.



Photo: Indian Coast Guard

"L&T Shipyards have achieved unmatched stellar delivery performance in prestigious MoD contracts for 54 Interceptor Boats for Coast Guard, Floating Dock project for Navy

and now the OPV for Coast Guard." ICGS Vikram class OPVs are long-range surface ships, equipped to handle helicopter operations and operate in Indian maritime zones including island territories. The role of the OPV is to conduct coastal and offshore patrolling, policing maritime zones, control & surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations with limited wartime roles. The vessels are approximately 97 meters long, displace 2,140 tons and have a range of 5,000 nautical miles. They can attain a sustained speed of up to 26 knots. According to Larsen and Toubro, construction of follow-on OPVs is progressing ahead of schedule at Kattupalli shipyard. OPV-2 has been launched and is being readied for harbor and sea trials.

Source: Naval Today

Xi Jinping's China shows off force in South China Sea

By [Ben Westcott](#), [Steven Jiang](#) and [Serenitie Wang](#), CNN
Updated 0944 GMT (1744 HKT) April 13, 2018



CNN) Chinese President Xi Jinping oversaw the largest naval parade in his country's history Thursday, as China concluded two days of military drills in the hotly contested South China Sea, a massive show of strength amid growing tensions with the United States. At least 10,000 personnel took part in drills, which involved 48 naval vessels and 76 fighter jets, said the country's Defense Ministry. Xi, dressed in camouflage military fatigues and speaking aboard the Chinese destroyer Changsha, called for further modernization efforts, and underlined his goal of transforming the country's navy into a "world-class force" under the leadership of the [Chinese](#)

[Communist Party](#). Chinese President Xi Jinping reviews a naval parade Thursday in the South China Sea. China's only aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, took part in the parade with a display of J-15 fighter jets under Xi's observation. Since coming to power in 2012, Xi has overseen considerable growth in Chinese naval power. Whereas previously the country's navy was largely defensive and confined to its immediate coastal waters, today it boasts significant "blue-water" capabilities, meaning it can project force into areas such as the Indian and Pacific oceans. But it's the South China Sea that represents the biggest potential challenge. The Chinese government claims a huge swath of territory across the sea, overlapping with claims of the Philippines and Vietnam, among others. The massive PLA navy drills in the South China Sea sent a clear signal to the other claimants in the region, as well as the US, Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told CNN. "The PLA Navy is there and they're there to stay," he said.

Taiwan drills announced

In a foreshadowing of future drills, the Fujian provincial maritime authority on Thursday announced live-fire naval exercises for April 18 in the Taiwan Strait, the first Chinese naval exercise in waters off the self governing island since September 2015. The announcement of drills in the Taiwan Strait comes after a month of growing tensions between China, Taiwan and the United States. Taiwan has been self-governed since a bloody civil war ended in 1949. Though both Taipei and Beijing view the island as part of China, neither government recognizes the legitimacy of the opposing side, with Beijing warning that it could retake the island by force if necessary. The US, which provides arms to the island, announced in the past week it would allow American manufacturers to [market submarine technology to Taiwan](#). In March, US President Donald Trump signed the Taiwan travel act to [encourage visits by officials in both Washington and Taipei](#), triggering a stream a thanks from the Taiwanese government and recriminations from Beijing. Xi had a [blunt message for Taiwan](#) during a nationalistic speech at the conclusion of the China's National People's Congress in March, where he warned against any attempts to

"split the motherland." "Every inch of our great motherland's territory cannot be separated from China," he said, drawing loud applause from his audience inside the Great Hall of the People.

US tensions over trade

The Chinese exercises are taking place amid rising tensions between Beijing and Washington over trade, but analysts have also expected the Trump administration to harden its policy on the South China Sea. A US aircraft carrier, the **USS Theodore Roosevelt**, arrived Wednesday in Manila, Philippines, for what was described as a "[scheduled port visit](#)." The US Navy recently conducted several "[freedom of navigation](#)" operations with warships sailing near increasingly militarized man-made Chinese islands in the South China Sea, triggering strong protests from Beijing. Earlier in the week, Xi gave a much anticipated speech at [the annual Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan province](#) on the northern edge of the South China Sea. The forum is the Chinese equivalent of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, involving high-level talks among economic leaders. Speaking Tuesday, Xi promised a new phase of [economic "opening up" from China](#) amid threats of a possible trade war with the United States. He also said China would stick to "[the path of peaceful development](#)" going forward. Holding such large drills directly on the back of their economic forum sent a clear message to the world, Koh said. "This is to highlight China is not just an economic power, but also a military and maritime power," he said.

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com>

Boustead Holdings bags RM44.77m job to maintain Navy's vessel

[Eric Schewe](#) April 11, 2018

KUALA LUMPUR (April 10):

Boustead Holdings Bhd has bagged an RM44.77 million contract for the maintenance and upgrading of combat management system for a Royal Malaysian Navy vessel. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia today, Boustead said its subsidiary Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS) has received a letter of work from the Ministry of Defence for the job. The contract is expected to contribute positively to the group's earnings for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2018, it added. Boustead shares closed three sen or 1.19% higher at RM2.56 today, with 160,500 shares traded, giving it a market capitalisation of RM5.15 billion. Over the past 12 months, the counter has fallen 3.82%.

Source: **Maasmond Maritime**

Expedition Will Search for the Wreck of Shackleton's Ship



The **Endurance** sinking beneath the ice, November 1915 (Royal Geographic Society)

By [MarEx](#) 2018-04-10 19:19:00

Next year, a team of scientists led by the University of Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Institute will launch a search for the wreck of the sailing vessel **Endurance**,

which was crushed and sunk by pack ice during Ernest Shackleton's famed Antarctic expedition. The wooden-hulled **Endurance** was a famously sturdy ship, with framing and sheathing so heavy that she could break ice. However, she was beset and trapped as Shackleton and his crew transited the Weddell Sea in January 1915. She drifted with the ice for months, but the extreme pressures eventually broke open her hull, and she began to flood in late October. On November 21, Shackleton ordered his crew to abandon ship, setting their legendary journey to salvation in motion. The wreck of the **Endurance** has never been found, despite multiple attempts. Next January, researchers from South Africa, New Zealand, the U.S. and the UK will board the supply/research icebreaker **Agulhas II** for a 45-day voyage to the Weddell Sea. They intend to examine Iceberg A-68, the gigantic 2,200 square mile sheet that [calved off](#) of the Larsen C ice shelf last July. As A-68 is close to the last recorded location of the **Endurance**, the team plans to add on a search for the wreck, which lies about two miles below the surface. The **Agulhas II** is equipped with multibeam sonar for a bottom search, and if the wreck location is covered by ice, the team can deploy free-swimming autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) to search the inaccessible area. "If the expedition finds the wreck we will survey, photograph, and film it and document its condition," said expedition leader Julian Dowdeswell, speaking to The Telegraph. "If there are deep-water marine species colonizing the wreck, the marine biologists may try to obtain scientific samples [using an ROV]." Source: <https://www.maritime-executive.com>

East London dry dock hosts SA Agulhas for maintenance lay-up

The SA **Agulhas** is back in the now-refurbished Port of East London's Princess Elizabeth dry dock, with improved facilities, for her lay-up maintenance plan after her previous visit in 2013

9th April 2018

By: Simone Liedtke



The **SA Agulhas** is back in the now-refurbished Port of East London's Princess Elizabeth dry dock, with improved facilities, for her lay-up maintenance plan after her previous visit in 2013. The contract to undertake maintenance on the 40-year-old vessel was awarded to local ship repair company East London Shipyard, and should take between four to six weeks to be completed during April. Work includes repairs and maintenance on the bow and stern thrusters, tail shaft, steering gear, compressors, cranes, deck machinery and hull. *"More than 80 direct jobs have been created during the project*

including employment for marine engineers, electricians, riggers, welders, fitters, painters and supervisory staff," said Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) Port of East London ship repair manager Leigh Carls. Carls added that the dry dock is also undergoing refurbishment and the project is at an advanced stage with R21-million invested to date and 70% of the work completed so far, including new switchgear and crane rails. *"Work began in 2015 with a phased approach being followed to enhance all critical components and allow for the dock to be functional throughout the upgrading process,"* he noted. The dry dock refurbishment, in support of ship repair and marine manufacturing, is part of TNPA's contribution nationally towards government's Operation Phakisa initiative, which aims to unlock the economic potential of the country's oceans by, among other things, accelerating investments into ship repair facilities and marine engineering capability. In the Port of East London, Operation Phakisa focuses on the ship repair and boatbuilding industries. The **SA Agulhas** is the fifth commercial vessel to make use of the dry dock over the past six months and was one of the star attractions at last year's East London Port Festival, as well as the People's Port Festival in Port Elizabeth earlier in the year. The vessel, which is the South African Maritime Safety Authority's dedicated training vessel, returned from a three-month trip to Antarctica at the end of February. Recently appointed Port of East London manager Sharon Sijako said on Monday that attracting more ship repair business to the port was an essential aspect of the new aggressive strategy to expand the port for the benefit of the region.

Source: <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za>

Workhorses of the sea



Drillship **Noble Bully 1** has been working for Shell in the Gulf of Mexico from 2012 until 2017, now cold stacked in **Caracas Bay - Curaçao**. Note the 'Huisman' drilling tower and related handling equipment.

Photo : Coen Terlouw (c)