

Lack of Crew Keeping New Zealand Naval Vessels at the Pier

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Royal New Zealand Navy has tied up three of its nine ships due to crew shortages.

279-foot offshore patrol vessels titled the HMNZS Wellington and HMNZS Otago and 180-foot inshore patrol vessel HMZNS Hawea are in docked at the Devonport Naval Base because there aren't enough Sailors to operate and maintain the ships.

Wellington, which reportedly returned early from a scheduled three-month deployment in November because of manpower shortages, is the latest ship to be taken from service and placed in a "care and custody" status.

Wellington and Otago have crews of 50 personnel and perform missions similar to U.S. Coast Guard medium endurance cutters. The Hawea has a crew of 27, and is similar in size and mission to U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutters.

Personnel from the three ships have been reassigned to other ships in the New Zealand fleet to keep them operational. No date has been set to return the ships to full duty. One of the causes for the attrition is competition from better paying jobs. Officials have cited a "widening gap between our sailor remuneration and what the highly competitive job market is offering."

As the U.S. and its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific Region counter China's growing economic and military posture in the region, the need for the presence of naval and coast guard ships becomes more acute. With 15,000 personnel, New Zealand's defence force is not large by regional standards, but it does provide search and rescue coverage for a large

part of the South Pacific, and provides vital support to smaller nations in Oceania. Having fewer ships available makes the job even harder.

Thai Navy Corvette Sinks in Heavy Seas



The HTMS Sukhothai is seen from the deck of HTMS Kraburi (FFG-457) just prior to sinking. ROYAL THAI NAVY ARLINGTON, Va. – The Royal Thai Navy (RTN) corvette HTMS Sukhothai (FS 442) has sunk in the Gulf of Thailand after foundering in heavy seas Dec. 1.

Of the crew of 106 personnel, 75 have been reportedly rescued as the search continues for the remaining 31 crewmembers.

According to Thai Navy statements, the corvette encountering rough seas which caused flooding of the propulsion and electrical spaces. The loss of power prevented the ship from pumping out water to regain stability.

The RTN dispatched ships to assist the Sukhothai, and HTMS Kraburi (FFG 457) arrived just before the ship sank. Other ships and aircraft arrived on the scene to rescue crew members.

The 251-foot, 960-ton Sukhothai was commissioned in 1987.

Other Thai Navy ships are assisting in the search for survivors, including the frigate HTMS Bhumibol Adulyadej (FFG-471) and landing platform dock HTMS Angthong (LPD-791).

Maritime Domain Awareness Starts with Seeing What's on the Sea



An Elbit Systems Seagull unmanned surface vessel operates alongside the patrol coastal ship USS Monsoon (PC 4) in the Arabian Gulf, Nov. 29, during Digital Horizon 2022. The three-week unmanned and artificial intelligence integration event involves employing new platforms in the region for the first time. U.S. ARMY / Sgt. Brandon Murphy

MANAMA, Bahrain – The U.S. Fifth Fleet's Task Force 59 is conducting Digital Horizon, an unmanned systems demonstration featuring a flotilla of different unmanned surface vessels to help build maritime awareness.

Digital Horizon is one of the ways that Task Force 59 is moving ahead with its objective of establish an international fleet of 100 unmanned systems by next summer.

While several platforms are currently operationally deployed by TF 59, Digital Horizon brought 10 new systems to Bahrain to work together to use their sensors and unique capabilities to share data to TF 59's shore-based Robotics Operations Center (ROC) by means of a communication "mesh network." At the ROC, the information is processed and analyzed using artificial intelligence and machine learning to sift through the voluminous data and determine what is normal activity and what is extraordinary so the abnormal contacts can be further investigated.

The unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) taking part in Digital Horizon include Elbit Systems' Seagull; Exail DriX; L3Harris

Arabian Fox and MAST-13; Marine Advanced Robotics WAM-V; MARTAC's MANTAS T-38 and Devil Ray T-12; Ocean Aero TRITON; Open Ocean Robotics Data Xplorer; Saildrone Explorer; Seasats X3; and SeaTrac SP-48. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are also participating in Digital Horizon, including two vertical take-off and landing systems, AeroVel's Flexrotor and Shield AI's V-BAT, as well as Easy Aerial's tethered UAV, which is carried in a container on top of one of the USVs.

Silvus Technologies is providing the line-of-sight radio communications system and Accenture Federal Services and Big Bear AI are providing data integration and artificial intelligence systems for the exercise. An Ocious USV is also operating off Western Australia and linking into the network.

Each of the different participating platforms offer unique specialized capabilities and attributes. All carried basic sensors such as cameras and AIS transponders. Some had more sophisticated sensor payloads like radar and meteorological. Some are relatively large and fast, while others are small but able to remain at sea for extended periods. Some could deploy small USVs or small aerial surveillance drones, and one could submerge and operate underwater. The USVs had various means of power and propulsion, including diesel engines, solar panels and sails.

The companies that have brought their systems to the exercise responded to a call for industry partners to share their technology and help TF 59 learn how to build effective networks and evaluate commercially available systems capable of performing well in the harsh at-sea environment in the Fifth Fleet area of operations. A selection committee of experts from different disciplines measured the dozens of candidate systems and technologies against a set of criteria to pick the companies to come and take part in Digital Horizon.

For Digital Horizon, Capt. Michael Brasseur, commander of Task

Force 59, said TF 59 and the industry partners are taking a methodical approach. "For the purposes of our exercise, we are at the early stages, getting our communications and network established. Then we'll start daytime operations, and then we'll go 24/7. What we're trying to do is not easy to accomplish with these different platforms and technologies, particularly here in the challenging operating environment of the Arabian Gulf."

While reporters were able to see USVs on the pier, being placed in the water, and operating at sea, Brasseur said the exercise will later employ the UAVs, with the information from each of the platforms "all integrated on a single pane of glass" at the ROC.

"We'll be running a series of vignettes that emulate real-world operations around this region to test how these systems perform and how the data is integrated," Brasseur said. "We've been working through our communications and making sure we were able to receive and present live video and radar feeds, and making sure that data flow could be integrated into the system where we can leverage the machine learning and AI moving forward with the exercise. The scenarios and the challenges will become more complex as the exercise progresses. We'll have a better understanding of the limitations of the sensors and the communications, as well as the power of the machine learning and AI to make sense of all the data."

TF 59 is already deploying USVs from operational hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan, with the objective of having 100 operational platforms by summer 2023. According to Brasseur, meeting that goal will be achieved by including partner nations in the region with a shared interest in creating the most complete understanding of the maritime environment. Digital Horizon will inform how best to employ the available technology to achieve that goal.

“The pace of innovation is amazing,” said Brasseur. “We are challenging our industry partners in one of the most difficult operational environments, and they are responding with enhanced capability, fast.”

National Museum of the Surface Navy to Present 2022 “Freedom of the Seas” Awards

SAN PEDRO, Calif. – The [National Museum of the Surface Navy \(NMSN\)](#) is presenting its 2022 “Freedom of the Seas” awards at a gala on Saturday night, Oct. 22, aboard the historic battleship USS Iowa at San Pedro, California.

According to retired Rear Adm. Mike Shatynski, the chairman of the board of NMSN and the Battleship USS Iowa Museum, said “the Freedom of the Seas Awards honor those individuals and organizations that embody the core principles of the American Surface Navy’s mission to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.”

Presented annually, the awards include the Freedom of the Seas award, Vice Adm. Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. Award, Humanitarian Award and the Commerce and Communications Award.

Secretary of Agriculture [Tom Vilsack](#) is being recognized with the 2022 Freedom of the Seas Award, which is presented to an accomplished individual who embodies the core principles of the American Surface Navy to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

Shatynski said Secretary Vilsack has been spearheading a

transformation of the food system to ensure that the food system of today and the future is more resilient and more competitive globally. “Under his leadership, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine are working together to enhance coordination between the U.S. and Ukrainian agriculture and food sectors to build a strategic partnership to address food insecurity.”

The 2022 VADM Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. Award will be presented to Retired Rear Admiral [Sinclair Harris](#), vice president, Client Relations for LMI. The award, which was named in honor of the first African American in the U.S. Navy to command a Navy ship, command a fleet and become a flag officer, recognizes leaders who exemplify the trailblazing, courageous service of the late U.S. Surface Navy vice admiral.

“During Rear Adm. Harris’ distinguished 34-year Navy career, which culminated as vice director for operations to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he led joint, combined, multinational and interagency organizations across all aspects of defense; commanded the U.S. Fourth Fleet; and led U.S. naval forces assigned to the U.S. Southern Command,” Shatynski said.

Jim Zenner, Director of Los Angeles County Military and Veteran Affairs, is being recognized with the 2022 Freedom of the Seas Humanitarian Award, which represents the Surface Navy’s response to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Zenner created the [Los Angeles County Veterans Peer Access Network](#) (VPAN), a veteran-led, community-driven support network serving veterans and their families by providing resources in the areas of mental health, substance misuse support, housing, workforce development and employment, healthcare, education, legal services, social connections and more. According to Shatynski, VPAN has become the model

program for integrated and effective veteran support for the country. “His contributions exemplifies the fearless bravery and tenacity necessary to sail through troubled waters to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which are core principles of America’s Surface Navy.”

The 2022 Commerce and Communications Award is being presented to the [California Trucking Association](#) (CTA). This award recognizes leaders in commercial shipping and communications that embody a core principle of the American Surface Navy in utilizing the ocean for the benefit of the free world.

Eric Sauer, Chief Executive Officer of CTA, will accept the award which recognizes the association’s instrumental role in the movement of cargo, specifically on the front line of the goods-movement industry over the past couple of years. Shatynski said CTA’s ongoing efforts to boost the economy, provide safe roads, protect the environment and lower emissions have ensured the safe and responsible movement of goods through the challenging times throughout and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Freedom of the Seas Awards are held in honor of the anniversary of the October 1944 Battle of Leyte Gulf anniversary, the largest naval battle of World War II, to honor those individuals and organizations that embody the core principles of the American Surface Navy’s mission to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

“As situations across the globe continue to emerge, change and get increasingly complex, the United States Surface Navy’s roles in international relations, free trade, humanitarian assistance and technological innovation becomes even more important,” Shatynski said. “The individuals and organizations that we are recognizing with this year’s Freedom of the Seas Awards, are leaders whose incredible work and accomplishments exemplify the values and mission of our organization and the Surface Navy.”

Major sponsors for the Freedom of the Seas Awards 2022 are Lockheed Martin, Marathon Petroleum, UPS, the Port of Los Angeles, Collier Walsh Nakazawa LLP and the Surface Navy Association.

Scheduled to open in 2025 aboard the historic Battleship USS Iowa Museum, the National Museum of the Surface Navy is the museum for America's Surface Navy. The museum's mission is to raise America's awareness of the importance of the United States Surface Naval Forces' role in international relations, free trade, humanitarian assistance and technological innovation, not just in the past but today and into the future.

'OpTech' Workshop Will Focus on Littoral Environment in Baltic Sea

HELSINKI – The Littoral OpTech Baltic Sea workshop coming up at the end of August in Helsinki may look like a logical dialogue to have with navies in the region in the shadow of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but it's not.

It comes as the two nations who are leading the event are preparing to joining the NATO alliance, but that is coincidental. In fact, this Littoral OpTech workshop was originally planned for two years ago and postponed twice because of the pandemic.

However, world events and the importance of littoral environments in areas such as the Black Sea and Baltic Sea, underscore the urgency of having this event now.

The Helsinki workshop will be held Aug. 30-31 at the Finnish Naval Academy and is one of a series of OpTechs held in different parts of the world in key littoral environments. The first was conducted in 2014 in Stockholm, with subsequent workshops conducted in important littoral areas of maritime operations including Japan, Columbia, Canada and Greece.

Other conferences and workshops have been held at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The workshops are usually two-day events, with the first day focused on the environment and operations and the second day examining new technologies. Participants also take part in a "war game" focused on a plausible maritime scenario in that part of the world.

Capt. Bo Wallander, a retired captain in the Royal Swedish Navy, has led the previous OpTechs, along with retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Steve Benson.

Wallander, who is producing the Helsinki event, said the purpose is "to gather international defense leaders, scientists, researchers, analysts, and think-tank experts to explore the unique operational and technological challenges to security and defense in typical cul-de-sac littorals, like the Baltic Sea."

The nations on the Baltic Sea are close to each other. The air distance between Kaliningrad and Helsinki is 357 nautical miles, and to Stockholm it's just 288 nautical miles. It's 161 nautical miles from St. Petersburg to Helsinki, and 372 nautical miles to Stockholm. So, reaction times are short.

"The goals of the workshop are to share experiences how to develop systems and operate and in a littoral environment," Wallander said.

"Focusing on the Littorals fosters collaboration on common security and defense concerns with an all-domain approach to solutions," Benson said.

Ready-to-Fight Force Conducts Amphibious Assault During RIMPAC 2022



Republic of Korea Marine Corps Amphibious Assault Vehicles cover and conceal during an amphibious raid for a multinational littoral operations exercise as part of Rim of the Pacific 2022, Aug. 1. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Sgt. Melanye Martinez*

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII – With the theme of “Capable Adaptive Partners,” the 2022 Rim of the Pacific exercise has featured a wide range of capabilities, projecting the inherent flexibility of maritime forces and helping to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, culminating with an amphibious assault in Hawaii.

During the exercise, 26 nations, 38 surface ships, four submarines, nine national land forces, more than 30 unmanned systems, approximately 170 aircraft and more than 25,000 personnel trained together while operating in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California, June 29 to Aug. 4.

Following weeks of workups, and then intensive training together when the exercise began, RIMPAC amphibious forces conducted a simulated assault on a beach and airfield at Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay on the island of Oahu in Hawaii.

RIMPAC has been led by the commander of U.S. 3rd Fleet, Vice Adm. Michael Boyle. Republic of Korea navy Rear Adm. Sangmin An served as the commander of Combined Task Force 176, RIMPAC’s amphibious task force, aboard his flagship,

amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2). His deputy was U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Michael Baze, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 3.

In the scenario, a fictional armed radical organization known as Draco has captured a beach and airfield and adjacent areas from a fictional friendly nation called Orion. The amphibious task force employed a multi-domain assault to capture it back.

By definition, an amphibious assault involves the establishment of a landing force on a hostile or potentially hostile shore. An amphibious force consists of an amphibious task force and a landing force. Both partner and partner nations and allies provide the forces that are organized equipped and trained for these specialty mission sets.

According to Col. Ricardo Miagany, assistant chief of staff for operations with Marine Forces Pacific, the ship-to-shore phase showcases multilateral interoperability approach.

“A flotilla of coalition naval vessels is supporting this amphibious assault. Each ship possesses unique capabilities that will be harnessed to dislodge the occupying forces,” he said.

In addition to Essex, the assault force included the ROKN landing helicopter platform ROKS Marado (LPH-6112); the Royal Australian Navy landing helicopter dock HMAS Canberra (L02); and the Mexican navy landing ship tank ARM Usumacinta (A412), the ex-USS Frederick (LST-1184).

“Each ship possesses unique capabilities that will be harnessed to dislodge the occupying forces. Today’s training highlights some of the capabilities of the forces of the amphibious partners in the region as we operate together for a collection of naval platforms and functioning as one joint naval task force,” said Miagany.

USMC F/A-18 Hornets and AH-1Z and UH-1 aircraft provided fire

support, and USMC CH-53E Super Stallions and MV-22 Ospreys delivered troops to the landing zone, USAF A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, a USAF MQ-9 Reaper and a USAF C-17 airlifter.

The ground assault included forces from Australia, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Kingdom of Tonga and the U.S.

Miagany said the “ready-to-fight force embarked on amphibious assault vehicles, small boats and aircraft, and attacked from the sea to the shore in one of the most complex and difficult form of maneuver and amphibious operations.”

Force Modernization

“For years we have practiced amphibious operations together, and many of the participants in sporting experience have experience working with Marine Expeditionary Unites. These will remain key facets of our crisis response roles in support of our alliances and security partnerships in the years ahead,” Miagany said. “These challenges in the constant evolution of military technology are focusing the Marine Corps and many of our partners on force modernization efforts. Marine Corps investment and experimentation efforts will enhance our collective security and improve U.S. crisis response capabilities.”

Miagany said “the amphibious assault today demonstrates the flexibility and strength of integrated and interoperable amphibious forces, the synergy of network allies and partners, the enduring value of amphibious crisis response capabilities, and provides a glimpse of the U.S. Marine Corps’ emerging core mission of providing stand-in forces which defend our allies and partners.”

According to Miagany, amphibious assaults are one of the most complex of all military operations.

“Only a small collection of militaries around the world are

capable of planning and executing them. This form of a maneuver warfare projects naval forces from ship to shore into contested spaces. Accomplishing this requires a tremendous amount of professionalism, partnership, compatible operating concepts and interoperable technology. When training and practicing these maneuvers throughout Hawaii in preparation for this mission, our nations are building relationships with each other and strengthening our interoperability. For years we have practiced amphibious operations together, and many of the participants this morning have experience working with Marine Expeditionary Units. These will remain key facets of our crisis response roles in support of our alliances and security partnerships in the years ahead.”

In addition to the operational demonstration, Marines from the 3d Littoral Combat Regiment displayed their tactical systems, including sensors such as the AN/TPS-80 Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar and weapons such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.

At the conclusion of the demonstration, Lt. Gen. Steven R. Rudder, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific and commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, congratulated the forces that had been training on the ground for the past month and a half, and referred to the assault as the “RIMPAC graduation exercise.”

“The blue water ops that have been that have been transpiring has been shaping this environment so that we can conduct this amphibious assault today,” Rudder said. “It’s the first time we’ve done an amphibious assault with nine countries during the RIMPAC exercise. Although bilateral is such a key part of all of our nation’s military exercising in the Indo-Pacific, the biggest operations are by nature joint, and are by nature multilateral.”

Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Exchange Provides Exclamation Point to RIMPAC



Ships sail in formation during sail in formation during Rim of the Pacific 2022, July 28. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Ian Thomas

HONOLULU – As this year’s biennial, multinational Rim of the Pacific naval exercise is drawing to a close, naval experts will gather in Honolulu to conduct the 2022 Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Exchange, or IMSE, essentially punctuating the end of RIMPAC with an exclamation point.

The conference is hosted by the Honolulu chapter of the Navy League and is being held at the Hawaii Convention Center Aug. 4-5.

According to retired Capt. Larry Osborn, a combination of three things makes IMSE unique – the location, the hybrid format and the enduring theme of building partnerships while focusing each year on a pertinent issue. The focus area for IMSE 2022 is “information sharing.”

As for location, “Honolulu, located in the mid-Pacific, is the only place where a U.S. combatant command is co-located with all its components,” said Osborn.

Produced as a hybrid event, Osborn said, “IMSE reaches across the Indo-Pacific and around the world with a live webinar broadcast while the in-person participants and attendees gather in a non-threatening, non-government venue to network informally and strengthen relationships.”



IMSE has no official relationship with RIMPAC, but it's not a coincidence that IMSE happens right after the exercise. The event will explore this "largest of all" multi-national exercise to learn how the maritime services from 26 nations share information and operate together effectively as a cohesive force.

Since it's a RIMPAC year, there will be representatives of a number of Indo-Pacific militaries already here. "We schedule IMSE to follow right after the RIMPAC closing to take advantage of the many foreign leaders present in Honolulu at that time," Osborn said.

IMSE 2022 will feature a number of senior leaders from the region, to include remarks from the Australian and Korean heads of navy. Adm. Sam Paparo, U.S. Pacific Fleet commander, will open the conference with a luncheon keynote. Discussion about the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue will include perspective from Indian, Japanese and U.S. senior leaders. Finally, a panel of ship commanding officers from the U.S., Malaysia, Australia, Korea, and the Philippines will share their RIMPAC experience.

Anyone can register at imsehawaii.org to attend IMSE 2022 virtually via a live webinar or in person. Registration will stay open until the conference opening. Navy League members attending in person receive a discount.

Royal Navy's New Ship Will be

an Autonomy and Lethality Accelerator



The U.K. Royal Navy's experimental vessel XV Patrick Blackett.
U.K. ROYAL NAVY

PORTSMOUTH, UK – The Royal Navy welcomed the experimental vessel XV Patrick Blackett (X01) on July 29 in a ceremony at Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

The Royal Navy refers to the new ship, which has the hull number X01, as an “autonomy and lethality accelerator” and a “maritime sandbox,” dedicated to exploring and demonstrating new, innovative technology at sea.

The ship, designed as an offshore support vessel, was acquired from the Dutch shipbuilder Damen and optimized for Royal Navy use. Its inherent modularity allows various systems and capabilities to be installed in the Royal Navy's PODS (Persistently Operationally Deployed Systems), or secured on deck, and plugged in to the ship's network to be evaluated.

The 135-foot ship will have a top speed of about 20 knots and have a crew of five. It is not expected to be operated autonomously without a crew.

The ship's namesake, physicist Patrick Blackett, served in the Royal Navy in WW I and later made groundbreaking contributions during WW II in the field of operational research. He won a Nobel Prize for his work in 1948.

The vessel will be operated as part of the Royal Navy's “NavyX” organization, which, according to its website, “rapidly develops, tests and trials cutting-edge equipment, with the aim of getting new technology off the drawing board and into the hands of our people on operations at a pace. Operating across all maritime environments – over water, on

water, underwater and the littoral. By empowering a team with diverse experience, NavyX will exponentially accelerate our speed of learning and our capacity to procure and integrate these best-in-class technologies.”

Missile Exercise Sends Frigate to the Bottom



Rim of the Pacific 2022 military forces from Australia, Canada, Malaysia and the United States fired upon and sunk the decommissioned ex-USS Rodney M. Davis (FFG 60), July 12, during a sinking exercise to gain proficiency in tactics, targeting and live firing against a surface target at sea.
U.S. NAVY

HAWAII – Units from Australia, Canada, Malaysia and the United States took part in a live-fire missile exercise that resulted in the sinking of a former U.S. Navy guided missile frigate at sea on July 12.

The ships and aircraft, which were participating in the Rim of the Pacific 2022 (RIMPAC) exercise, sank the decommissioned ex-USS Rodney M. Davis (FFG 60) July 12, in waters 15,000 feet deep, 50 nautical miles north of Kauai.

According to a statement from the RIMPAC Combined Information Bureau, “Live-fire events provide realistic training that refine partner nations’ abilities to plan, communicate and conduct complex maritime operations such as precision and long-range strike capabilities.”

The objective of the sinking exercise, or SINKEX, is to “gain proficiency in tactics, targeting and live firing against a

surface target at sea,” the statement said.

“This exercise provided a great opportunity for the extremely talented Sailors, soldiers and aviators who comprise the RIMPAC 2022 team to hone their skills in a live-fire setting,” said Royal Canadian Navy Rear Adm. Christopher Robinson, deputy commander of the RIMPAC Combined Task Force. “There is nothing that really replaces the training value of opportunities such as this, which enable us to test our weapons and their associated combat systems with as much realism as possible. These live-fire exercises are vital for maintaining our proficiencies, building our interoperability, and increasing our readiness for future operations.”

Royal Canadian Navy frigate HMCS Winnipeg (FFH 338) fired two Harpoon missiles as part of the SINKEX. A U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft deployed an AGM-84D Harpoon missile, and an F/A-18F Super Hornet from Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) launched an GBU-16 laser guided bomb for the event.

The 1,850-ton, 321-foot Royal Malaysian Navy corvette KD Lekir fired an Exocet MM40 missile during the SINKEX. Lekir is the first Royal Malaysian Navy ship to launch a missile and hit a target outside of Malaysian waters. The ship had also recently fired an Exocet during the Taming Sari exercise north of the Strait of Malacca in May.

“The SINKEX was a professionally enriching experience for the crew of KD Lekir,” said Adm. Mohd Reza Mohd Sany, chief of the Royal Malaysian Navy. “These events provide an excellent platform toward enhancing interoperability amongst the participating navies. The involvement is an experience that will elevate the professionalism of the KD Lekir crew,” said Mohd Reza. “The biggest international maritime exercise is an opportunity for a joint exercise involving various countries while strengthening cooperation among the participants,”

“The coordinated firing of anti-ship munitions is a complex activity. This SINKEX demonstrates the interchangeability of the capable and adaptive RIMPAC partners,” said Royal Australian Navy Commodore Paul O’Grady, commander of the RIMPAC maritime forces component. “In doing so, significant measures were taken to protect the maritime training environment.”

The ex-Rodney M. Davis was a 4,100-ton, 453-foot Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigate that served in the U.S. Navy from 1987 to 2015. Preparing decommissioned ships for sinking follows a rigorous process to ensure there are no hazardous materials, fuels or lubricants still onboard. The target ships must be sunk in water at least 6,000 feet deep and at least 50 nautical miles from land.

RIMPAC Fire

At least one mishap was reported during RIMPAC. A Peruvian navy corvette, BAP Guise (CC 28), suffered a fire outbreak July 18. A statement from the Peruvian navy said the fire was “mitigated and controlled by the crew with support of foreign units.”

The ship was not identified in the initial statements from the RIMPAC Command Information Bureau, but the Guise was identified in subsequent statement from the Peruvian navy.

According to a statement from the CIB, the RIMPAC watch floor received the report of a fire and potential injuries aboard a Combined Task Force ship around 8:00 a.m., Sunday morning Hawaii time. “Two critically stable patients were evacuated from the ship by a helicopter from French Navy frigate FS Prairial (F731) to USCGC Midgett (WMSL 757), and have since been transferred ashore by U.S. Navy helicopter from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72),” the statement said.

“Two crew members suffered burns as a result of it and were evacuated by helicopter for their respective care at a

specialized hospital in Honolulu, the details having been communicated to their relatives,” the Peruvian Navy statement said. “It should be noted that the rest of the naval personnel are unharmed.”

RIMPAC is the world’s largest international maritime exercise, with 26 nations, 38 ships, four submarines, more than 170 aircraft, more than 30 unmanned systems and 25,000 personnel participating this year in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. The biennial exercise will conclude Aug. 4. RIMPAC 2022 is the 28th exercise in the series that began in 1971.

U.S. Affirms Support for Philippines Over Disputed Islands



Philippine Navy frigate BRP Antonio Luna (FF 151) arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam to participate in the Rim of the Pacific 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Demetrius J. Williams*

MANILA, Philippines – Demonstrators gathered outside the Chinese embassy in Manila on July 12 to mark the sixth anniversary of 2016 international court arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing’s vast territorial claims in the South China Sea. The Philippines say China continues to harass its vessels and personnel near the disputed islands and in the country’s exclusive economic zone.

In a statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Manila on July 12, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on the

Peoples Republic of China to comply with the decision by an arbitration tribunal after the Philippine government complained in 2013 about China's increasingly assertive claims and aggressive actions around its islands in the South China Sea.

China has unilaterally claimed that virtually all islands in the South China Sea belongs to it.

Blinken said the Arbitral Tribunal, which was constituted at The Hague under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, delivered a unanimous decision, which is final and binding on the Philippines and the PRC. "In its ruling, the Tribunal firmly rejected the PRC's expansive South China Sea maritime claims as having no basis in international law. The Tribunal also stated that the PRC has no lawful claim to the areas determined by the Arbitral Tribunal to be part of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. We also reaffirm that an armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty."

In a May address at George Washington University, Blinken said China is advancing unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea and undermining peace and security, freedom of navigation, and commerce.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo said Tuesday called the 2016 arbitration ruling an "indisputable" decision.

"These findings are no longer within the reach of denial and rebuttal and are conclusive as they are indisputable," said Manalo. "The award is final."

Despite rhetoric by the previous president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, where he said the Philippines would move away from U.S. influence and establish closer ties with China, he later had a change of heart when his

overtures failed to deliver results.

The new Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who assumed office on June 30, and his government are expected to seek closer ties with the U.S. And today, the U.S.-Philippines partnership remains strong.

In August of last year, Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, traveled to the Philippines to mark the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty and reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the alliance with the Philippines.

“Both of our nations have made it clear that we are committed to the alliance, and that we remain prepared to fight alongside and defend each other using all of our capabilities to preserve peace and stability in the region – just as we have before,” Aquilino said.

On May 23 of this year, Aquilino and the chief of staff of the armed forces of the Philippines, Gen. Andres Centino, signed the Maritime Security (Bantay Dagat) Framework at USINDOPACOM headquarters on Camp Smith, Hawaii. According to a statement from INDOPACOM, “Bantay Dagat” is a Tagalog term that means “Guardian of the Sea,” illustrating U.S. and Philippine resolve to improve regional maritime domain awareness and confront maritime challenges together. The framework is designed to enable a holistic, intergovernmental approach to maritime security through the interoperability of U.S. and Philippine maritime forces and option to include interagency organizations, and is a testament to the strength of the U.S.–Philippines alliance.”

The Philippine navy’s 2,600-ton, 351-foot guided-missile frigate BRP Antonio Luna (FF-151) is currently participating in the 2022 Rim of the Pacific exercises off Hawaii.