

# Navy Studying Arming P-8A Aircraft with the AARGM-ER Missile



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NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Navy is conducting an integration study for arming its P-8A maritime patrol aircraft with the AGM-88G Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile – Extended Range (AARGM-ER), a Navy program official said.

Capt. Alex Dutko, program manager for Direct and Time-Sensitive Strike, speaking April 3 to reporters in person and remotely at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor, said the integration of AARGM-ER on the P-8A would be for external carriage on the aircraft’s wing stations.

The AARGM-ER, the latest version of the anti-radar missile designed to neutralize or destroy enemy air-defense radar stations, is an upgrade of the AGM-88E AARGM and is designed for internal or external carriage. The ER version integrates the AGM-88E sensors and electronics with a new solid-fuel rocket motor and tail control. The ER has a diameter of 11.5 inches, compared with the baseline’s 10-inch diameter.

The new version is designed to be carried internally in a weapons bay as well as externally. The AARGM-ER will be carried internally on the F-35A and F-35C versions of the Lightning II strike fighter and externally on those aircraft plus the F-35B, F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighter, and the EA-18G electronic attack aircraft.

The AARGM-ER entered Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP) during the fourth quarter of fiscal 2021 and has completed three of four Developmental Test firings. The fourth is scheduled for

April. The second LRIP contract was awarded during the first quarter of fiscal 2022. LRIP 3 currently is in negotiation with Northrop Grumman, Dutko said.

Operational Test of the AARGM-ER is scheduled for completion during fiscal 2024, with Initial Operational Capability slated for the first quarter of that year. Full-Rate Production is expected to begin in fiscal 2025.

The missile will be available for Foreign Military Sales with LRIP 4, with deliveries occurring in fiscal 2026. Dutko said that the Navy is working to expand a cooperative agreement with the Italian Air Force – which carries the AARGM on its Tornado strike fighters – to include the AARGM-ER version. He said that multiple countries have expressed interest in the AARGM-ER.

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## **U.S. Goal: Maintaining Extended Presence in Arctic's Harsh Environment**



NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – U.S. Navy and Coast Guard officials say maintaining a reliable presence in the Arctic, by ship, aircraft or submarine, is crucial to protecting American interests and sovereignty in the High North.

However, Coast Guard Vice Commandant Admiral Steven Poulin said maritime patrol planes and ice breakers aren't enough to achieve his "top priority" of forward presence in the Arctic's hostile environment.

Speaking on an Arctic strategy panel April 3, Poulin said consideration of the supply and repair needs of those systems and the care of the men and women who crew those systems requires investment in infrastructure to support forward basing. Both Poulin and another panel member, Vice Admiral William Houston, Commander of Naval Submarine Forces and the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, agreed there were three U.S. strategic objectives in the Arctic: sovereignty, safety, and security. They also agreed that to accomplish them U.S. Arctic maritime operations must extend beyond Alaskan waters.

Allies and partners that share values like freedom of navigation, environmental concerns and the rule of law are needed, especially since the United States has only two ice breakers and no deepwater ports or air bases bordering the Arctic Ocean. Kodiak, Alaska near the Bering Sea, is a thousand miles from Alaska's Arctic coast.

Melting Arctic sea ice due to climate change has been opening new sea lanes, untapped fisheries, and previously unreachable petroleum, natural gas, and mineral deposits across the top of the world.

The Arctic is "an area of increasing human activity" and "increasing global competition, whether it's for resources, access or presence. And so, for us, the key is good governance, a rules-based order that increases stability for the region. It's also about protecting America's sovereignty and sovereign rights," Poulin said.

Russia has increased its military presence along its Arctic coast, reopening Cold War era bases and building several new ones. China, which styles itself a "near Arctic nation," has made several scientific expeditions in the region and has conducted at least one naval exercise with Russia inside U.S. territorial waters.

Houston said Navy submarines have plied polar waters since 1947, and U.S. submarines, aircraft and other surface vessels

have conducted 100 exercises like ICEX and Northern Edge with the United Kingdom, France, and Canada among other nations' navies. U.S. submarines are now stopping in Tromso, Norway to pick up supplies and drop off and pick up crewmembers.

Both Poulin and Houston said communications at high latitudes was a challenge. The Navy is investing "a quarter of a billion dollars" in the Arctic where communications is absolutely key, said Houston. "If you cannot communicate, you can get yourself in a lot of trouble." The Navy has no surface vessels with ice hardened hulls. The Coast Guard's first polar security cutter, a heavy, armed ice breaker, is not expected to be available for years. Poulin said the Coast Guard was hoping for delivery in Fiscal 2026.

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## **Navy Commissions First LCS with New GE Composite Engine Enclosure**



NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. — The littoral combat ship (LCS) commissioned April 1 is the first equipped with the new lightweight gas turbine engine enclosure designed by GE Marine to provide greater safety and more comfortable engineering spaces for Sailors, a GE Marine official said.

Steve Rogers, director of Marketing and Business Development for GE Marine Engines, told Seapower in an April 3 interview at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor, said that the Independence-class littoral combat ship USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32) is the first LCS to be fitted with the new lightweight composite-material enclosure for its engines.

“Traditionally what the Navy has used is a is a steel base on which it sits and then an enclosure with steel walls. So ... loud, noisy, hot,” Rogers said. “Now it’s a single forward composite piece for the walls and the roof. So, you don’t have rust maintenance and things like that. But more importantly, [there’s] 60% less airborne noise in the engine room.”

Rogers said the temperature of the enclosure walls, “is anywhere from 25 to 50 degrees cooler. So, a lot less heat is being ejected into the engine room and the Sailors have more access, better access to the engine.”

He said the composite enclosure is 2.5 tons lighter than the steel enclosure with the same footprint, providing ship designers with the flexibility to devote more weight capacity to fuel, payloads, or other uses. The new enclosure meets the Navy’s standards for fire protection and toxicity.

The U.S. Navy will be installing the composite enclosures on its Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers and Constellation-class guided-missile frigates. The enclosure also is being installed on the Finnish Navy’s Pohjanmaa-class corvettes.

Rogers said his company has seen no supply chain issues with producing the composite enclosure, pointing out that composite material is made five miles from the plant where the enclosure is made.

GE Marine Engines is working to improve the efficiency of its gas turbine engines while maintaining the same power output and reliability, Rogers said, also noting that the company is working to meet power requirements for warships to deploy such systems as laser weapons.

He said GE Marine Engines is expanding its global network – maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facilities and service technicians – to meet the requirements of its far-flung customers. The company maintains MROs in Canada, Germany,

India, Italy, Japan, and South Korea.

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# Coast Guard Uses New Tech for Oil Spill Response



Kirsten Trego talks about the USCG – Oil Spill Response: Tech Effort on the Horizon in the exhibit hall.

When most people think of the U.S. Coast Guard, they envision daring rescues at sea. But the USCG has a variety of lesser-known but equally important duties, said USCG Capt. (Ret.) Kirsten Trego.

During the Monday morning presentation, “USCG Oil Spill Response: Tech Efforts on the Horizon,” Trego discussed how the Coast Guard is the federal on-scene coordinator for oil-discharge cleanup in the coastal zone. That zone not only includes the nation’s shores, but also rivers, waterways, the Great Lakes and more.

“If something happens, we’re the best prepared,” she said.

The USGS has a 30-person team dedicated to oil-spill responses. One of the team’s focuses is working with the oil and gas industry, state and local governments, federal agencies and academia to research how oil spills are evolving and how best to deal with them.

Trego said these research initiatives include the Great Lakes Oil Center of Expertise, which is dedicated to research, training and testing focused on freshwater and cold-weather conditions during an oil-spill response.

The Coast Guard is also increasingly relying on uncrewed

systems to more quickly and safely respond to spills, Trego said. New technology like sub-surface remote sensing uses long-range autonomous underwater vehicles to detect oil under ice in the Great Lakes. There is also an air focus, including remote-sensing unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

“And where the fun is, is the NOAA MESDIS Marine Pollution Surveillance Program from space,” Trego said. Remote-sensing UAS can see oil spills from space, characterize them and report the data.

Trego anticipates more UAS involvement in oil-spill responses in the future. “In the changing landscape of more oil exploration and more risk, traditional methods are no longer viable,” she said. “When spills happen, we need to be ready and available to handle them.”

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## **Panelists Discuss Challenges in Navigating Space as a Warfighting Domain**



Space may have been the final frontier for the Starship Enterprise, but it's the current frontier for the worlds' fighting forces. As nations race to conquer this military high ground, the U.S. Department of Defense and private industry are increasingly working together to ensure American warfighters' place in space now and in the future.

During the Monday afternoon panel, “Space: The 5th Warfighting Domain,” four representatives from the military and industry discussed the following questions from moderator Theresa

Hitchens, a reporter with Breaking Defense, and audience members.

**We've heard a lot about how the threat environment is changing. What keeps you up at night in that regard?**

VADM Jeffrey Trussler, USN, deputy chief of naval operations for information warfare, N2/N6, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations/Director of Naval Intelligence, said he's concerned about both the expanded use of the RF spectrum and China's efforts in space.

Because the Navy is reliant on RF, it needs to look at the best ways to use the RF spectrum as the space layer proliferates, he said.

Meanwhile, China has made its intentions for space supremacy public knowledge, and that's earned the attention of the Department of Defense.

"I've never seen a department more focused on an adversary and what we need to do," Trussler said. "The work we're doing in space, we're going to move out and move out fast."

Derek Tournear, PhD, executive director, Space Development Agency, discussed resiliency. His company launched 10 satellites on Sunday as part of its effort to put hundreds of small satellites in the sky rather than a few large ones that are easier to shoot down. Tournear said Space Development Agency is also concerned about common mode failures, especially cyberthreats, RF spectrum threats, and supply-chain threats.

Steven Butow, director, space portfolio, Defense Innovation Unit, said from a commercial standpoint, economic security and national security are intertwined. That makes it important to work across all levels of government for financial stability.

**How do you deal with overclassification?**

Butow said an argument can be made that moving fast is more effective than locking down information for long periods of time.

“Industry knows how to lock down information, but also how to release it and commoditize it,” he said.

Ed Zoiss, president, space & airborne systems, [L3Harris Technologies](#), said a private company can be a matchmaker when its customers are working on similar classified technologies.

Trussler believes the problem isn't just overclassification. “Even our simple acquisition processes give information to China,” he said. “It's about how we share information and doing it right. It's not as simple as overclassification.”

Tournear made the case for selectively releasing information. “We can't deter if can't talk about it. Thirty years ago, we couldn't say ‘national reconnaissance office,’ but the Soviets already knew we had it,” he said. “We need to make sure we know what we need to protect, but also talk about what we're doing so there's a deterrence factor.”

**LEO (low earth orbit) has thousands of satellites. How concerned are you about debris, signal interference and collision?**

“Two thoughts: Space is congested, and space is big – it depends on the orbital regime,” Tournear said. There can be unintended consequences to mitigating congestion, but he believes that policies that promote being a good steward in your orbital slot can be effective.

Butow pointed out that there are more planes in the U.S. airspace than satellites in LEO, but the planes are regulated. That's why he thinks it's important that a space traffic commission be formalized and adopted on a global scale.

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# Transition Connection Provides Career Support for Service Members



Over a million men and women serve as active-duty members of our military, with an additional 800,000 in reservist roles. Every year, approximately 200,000 of those service members transition out of the military and into civilian roles. That transition is not always easy.

Transition Connection is an important hiring and networking event that links everyone in the military community, from enlisted service members to veterans to military spouses and civilians, with organizations looking for the caliber of employees that come from having a strong military connection.

Navy League CEO Mike Stevens kicked off the event, introducing Dr. Ernie Rosado, Director of Military Outreach for Columbia Southern University. The Navy League has recently partnered with Columbia Southern to offer a new scholarship for military spouses that grants 60 credit hours towards any degree program at CSU.

“You folks are critical in this next process for all these folks that are transitioning,” said Rosado. “I know you will match that individual that has been protected by the military for years. And now they’re stepping out and they’re by themselves with their families. So, help them out. Let’s do a good job today,” he said.

During the four-hour event, members of the military had the opportunity to meet with some of the leading employers seeking

to make offers to individuals that are either transitioning out of military service, trying to find a job that offers flexibility for military families on the move, or looking for out-of-the box options and support for civilian employment.

First time participants from [American Systems](#) commented on the big turnout and were excited to assist service members with the hiring process. “We support a number of different types of programs throughout the country and enterprise,” said Ed Wakeley and Chris McBeth of American Systems. “I support mostly Navy waterfront programs,” commented McBeth. “So engineering, training of getting ships ready to get back out to the South China Sea.”



Amazon, a regular Sea-Air-Space participant, have pledged to hire 100,000 transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses over the course of five years, said representatives John Pierce and Matt McGury. “As transitioned service members and advocates, we’re here to help answer questions [and] give guidance,” said Pierce. He also stressed that [many of the roles at Amazon](#) are a good fit because they utilize similar skill sets. “A lot of our data center positions are cleared facilities [...] operations mission critical facilities, very similar for military individuals. The skill sets that they offer work very well within our teams and the jobs that we have,” Pierce said.

Laura Hatcher, a 31-year [Navy veteran turned photographer](#), wasn’t at the event to hire, but to provide professional headshots to attendees at no cost. “This is my second career, and the majority of my clients are transitioning veterans, because that’s what I went through,” Hatcher said. “I understand it. And I love these kinds of events, mainly because you get to stay in the community and [help] a lot of people that are looking for jobs,” she said.

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# Q&A with Naval Supply Systems Command

*Seapower magazine interviews Vice Commander Kurt J. Wendelken*

What are the roles of the Naval Supply Systems Command?

1. NAVSUP and the Supply Corps conduct and enable supply chain, acquisition, operational logistics and Sailor & family care activities with our mission partners to generate readiness and sustain naval forces worldwide to prevent and decisively win wars.

How is the era of great power competition affecting NAVSUP's roles and responsibilities?

1. As Navy's end-to-end supply chain integrator, NAVSUP is working hard to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness in Navy's supply chains. One major initiative is Naval Sustainment System-Supply (NSS-S). Naval Sustainment System (NSS) is a combination of commercial best practices, process improvements, governance and oversight to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness within available means. NSS-Supply embraces industry best practices tailored for specific Navy needs and fleet operations in order to reduce maintenance turnaround times, increase end-to-end velocity of spares, repairs, and reduce costs.

Why does the Navy's supply chain need the transformation of the Naval Sustainment System-Supply?

1. NSS-Supply seeks to strengthen Navy's supply chain in order to increase readiness, thus enhancing combat capability and creating a model of sustainment that will allow the Navy to effectively generate readiness and sustain global navy power.

How does NAVSUP fit in the Navy's push for more distributed maritime operations and in the Marine Corps' expeditionary advance base operations?

1. Combined with the most robust, end-to-end logistics doctrine that the world has ever seen, NAVSUP provides uninterrupted (despite contested environment) supply chain management, bulk and aviation fueling capability, material handling equipment, contracting, hazardous material management, household goods and vehicle processing and postal operations to fleet, installation and other service components throughout every area of operations.

How will management of the supply chain be more integrated and streamlined with the warfighting commands?

1. By extension, NSS-Supply embraces industry best practices tailored for specific Navy needs and fleet operations in order to reduce maintenance turnaround times, increase end-to-end velocity of spares, repairs, and reduce costs.

What major segments of the supply chain are not owned by NAVSUP? How does the Defense Logistics Agency's roles compare with those of NAVSUP?

1. NAVSUP and the Supply Corps conduct and enable service specific supply chain, acquisition, operational

logistics, and Sailor & family care activities with our mission partners to generate readiness and sustain naval forces worldwide to prevent and decisively win wars. The Defense Logistics Agency is the DoD executive agent for specific classes of supply that are common across the military services like food, fuel, construction material, and medical supplies. They also provide extensive warehousing services across DoD.

What are that current challenges that NAVSUP faces with the defense industry in executing the supply chain?

1. Executing an effective naval supply chain is increasingly challenging, in part due to the Defense Department's pressure on industry to become lean. We now face raw material shortages, weapon systems obsolescence, a shrinking skilled labor pool, excessive acquisition lead times, and a dwindling sub vendor base with a heavy reliance on sole source vendors. Maintaining our current warfighting edge requires better collaboration and transparency with industry. We need to invest in sustainment up front, consider where prepositioning materials makes sense, and work better to reverse the current trends deteriorating material lead times.

What new technologies look promising in aiding NAVSUP in streamlining the supply chain?

1. NAVSUP manages Navy's globally distributed, highly complex, and increasingly digital supply chains. LOG IT and Supply Chain systems are critical enablers in generating and sustaining readiness. NAVSUP is proactively taking steps to deliver modern digital solutions that support real-time operations to include system modernization, leveraging internet of things

(IOT) technology and machine learning/artificial intelligence to improve asset visibility.

What can be done to expand competition among suppliers?

1. NAVSUP contracting offices attempt to enhance competition through early outreach in an effort to identify as many potential sources as possible. The use of Industry Days is also a popular method among NAVSUP contracting offices for specific types of procurements, such as ship repair or husbanding. These are established days where potential sources are invited to attend and learn as NAVSUP provides guidance on doing business with the government. This is a way to ease private sector concerns and generate interest.

What can the defense industry do to help the Navy improve its supply chain?

1. Just as the Navy has incorporated a "Get Real, Get Better" mantra, so we ask industry to embrace the same. We are all working towards a collective goal of supporting national defense, and it is imperative to operate with transparency and honesty, not distrust. Short-term, be accurate with contract schedules and deliver on time in accordance with contractual commitments. Increase the number and scope of strategic contracts to help offset material, labor, and financial stressors. Long-term, deepen the partnership with the Navy to create a more effective sustainment environment earlier in weapons system development. With more agility and cooperation, we can identify, plan, and overcome supply chain barriers to better support our fleet, which is the ultimate goal.

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# Navy Orders Third Lot of Next-Generation Jammer Pods



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ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has placed an order with Raytheon for the third lot of ALQ-249 Next-Generation [Jammer-Mid-Band \(NGJ-MB\) pods](#).

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded a \$650 million fixed-price incentive (firm target) and cost-plus-fixed-fee contract to Raytheon, “for the production and delivery of low-rate initial production (LRIP) Lot III Next Generation Jammer (NGJ) Mid-Band (MB), to include 15 NGJ-MB LRIP ship sets (2 pods per ship set), 11 for the Navy and four for the government of Australia,” a March 30 Defense Department contract announcement said.

The contract also includes “associated spares, support equipment, non-recurring engineering and associated data.”

The NGJ-MB is a portion of the overall NGJ program that will replace the legacy ALQ-99 jamming pods on board the EA-18G aircraft. When the NGJ is combined with the EA-18G’s comprehensive suite of radar and communications receivers, electronic warfare officers can detect, analyze and react to current and future threat systems.

Raytheon delivered two production-representative NGJ-MB pods to the Navy’s Airborne Electronic Attack Systems Program Office (PMA-234) pod shop in July 2022 where they were used for testing.

Initial operational capability of the NGJ-MB was scheduled for fall 2023, according to information obtained in 2022.

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## **Senate Seapower Chair: Committee Will Drill Down on Navy's Amphib Issue**



SASEBO, Japan (Sept. 15, 2021) The amphibious dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) departs Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo, Japan (CFAS), Sept. 15, 2021. Germantown will shift home ports from Sasebo to San Diego after serving as a forward-deployed ship in U.S. 7th Fleet since Jan. 5, 2011. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jasmine Ikusebiala)

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WASHINGTON – The new chairman of the Senate's Seapower subcommittee said he plans to drill down on the issue of the Navy's requirement for 31 large and medium amphibious warships and why the 2024 budget does not apparently support that requirement, which is law.

"I'm still mystified with the reticence of the president's budget with respect to meeting our 31 amphib requirement," said Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, speaking March 2 in his first online press conference since becoming chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee's Seapower subcommittee.

In the 2024 budget proposal, the Navy plans to decommission three old Whidbey Island-class dock landing ships (LSDs) but declined to fund any more Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ships (LPDs) over the next five

years.

The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Navy to sustain a force level of 31 large and medium amphibious warships.

“Last year, when we had the hearing, all three – the SECNAV, the [Marine Corps] commandant, the CNO – all said, ‘Look, we’re all on the same page,” Kaine said. “There’s no difference between us. They promised that a study would be forthcoming soon. That showed that the requirement that the Marines need to basically meet their objectives and our national security objectives is 31 amphibs.”

“The president’s budget doesn’t suggest that they’re making that kind of investment to get us to 31,” he said. “I’ve heard testimony from our Navy and Marine leadership enough to know that the 31 amphibs is the requirement and somebody’s going to have to do a pretty amazing job to convince me otherwise at this point. They have been so consistent on that for a significant period of time.”

Kaine said, “The Navy should know that we’re really going to dig into this. We have been convinced that the number is 31 and we’ve yet to be told by anybody that it’s not 31. So, is there a mismatch between the SECNAV, commandant, and CNO? And with the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] is there a mismatch with OMB [Office of Management and Budget]? I don’t know exactly where the mismatch is, but I think it’s above the Navy. I think the Navy and Marines are completely on board on this. The consistency of this testimony has been notable. If that’s the case, you’re going to see a really strong bias on the committee to make sure [the Navy] has the funds for 31 and not drop below it.

The senator said he has seen “tentative suggestion” that the level of 31 could be reached if the funds were made available next beginning next year “But that is sending a confusing

message that suggests that they're not really committed to 31. I think the committee is committed to 31."

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# 7th Fleet Destroyer conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea



[Release from U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs](#)

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NEWS | March 23, 2023

7th Fleet Destroyer conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea

By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

PARACEL ISLANDS, South China Sea –

On March 24 (local time) Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Milius (DDG 69) asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands, consistent with international law. At the conclusion of the operation, Milius exited the excessive claim and continued operations in the South China Sea. This freedom of navigation operation ("FONOP") upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging the restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, and Vietnam and also by challenging PRC's claim to straight baselines enclosing the Paracel Islands.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.

The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. The customary international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention provides for certain rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea to all nations. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability, and prosperity.

The United States upholds freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.

The PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam each claim sovereignty over the Paracel Islands. In violation of customary international law, all three claimants require either permission or advance notification before a military vessel or warship engages in "innocent passage" through the territorial sea. Under customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention, the ships of all States –including their warships –enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea. The unilateral imposition of any authorization or advance-notification requirement for innocent passage is unlawful. By engaging in innocent passage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United States challenged these unlawful restrictions imposed by the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The United States demonstrated that innocent passage is not be

subject to such restrictions.

The United States also challenged the PRC's 1996 declaration of straight baselines encompassing the Paracel Islands. Regardless of which claimant has sovereignty over these islands, it is unlawful to draw straight baselines around the Paracel Islands in their entirety. Customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention is both clear and comprehensive regarding the circumstances under which States can depart from "normal" baselines. The PRC-claimed straight baseline violates international law of the sea as reflected in Article 7 of the Law of the Sea Convention. Furthermore, international law does not permit continental States, like the PRC, to establish baselines around entire dispersed island groups. With these baselines, the PRC has attempted to claim more internal waters, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf than it is entitled to under international law. By conducting this operation, the United States demonstrated that these waters are beyond what the PRC can lawfully claim as its territorial sea, and that the PRC claimed straight baselines around the Paracel Islands are inconsistent with international law.

U.S. forces operate in the South China Sea on a daily basis, as they have for more than a century. They routinely operate in close coordination with like-minded Allies and partners that share our commitment to uphold a free and open international order that promotes security and prosperity. All of our operations are conducted safely, professionally, and in accordance with customary international law. The operations demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows –regardless of the location of excessive maritime claims and regardless of current events.