

CNO, MCPON Attend Largest Maritime Exercise in the World, Emphasize Interoperability with Allies and Partners



PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea tour the Royal New Zealand Navy Ship HMNZS Aotearoa (A-11) during Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024, July 11. (U.S. Navy photo by MCC Michael Zingaro/Released)

HONOLULU – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) James Honea traveled to Hawaii, July 10-12, 2024, to meet with Sailors and visit Allies and partners participating in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise 2024.

Franchetti and Honea visited several U.S. and partner nation ships, where they spoke with Sailors and service members across the Joint Force, observed the ongoing exercise, and emphasized the strategic importance of interoperability with Allies and partners.

“RIMPAC is the world’s premier joint and combined exercise in the maritime domain. It’s a great opportunity to operate, to train, and to build interoperability with an amazing cross section of Allies and partners, from the Indo-Pacific to the Americas and to Europe,” said Franchetti. “It’s really important that we work together on areas of mutual concern to maintain freedom of the seas and uphold the rules based international order that has supported peace, stability and prosperity for so many years.”

CNO and MCPON started the visit by holding an all hands call at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, with Sailors assigned to USS Shiloh (CG 67), USS Antietam (CG 54), USS Wayne E Meyer (DDG 108), USS Decatur (DDG 73), and USS Hopper (DDG 70) in attendance. CNO and MCPON thanked the Sailors for their service and all that they do to contribute to America's Warfighting Navy.

"Thank you. Thank each and every one of you for what you do, for being the warfighters that you are, for building the warfighting teams that you do and all the readiness it takes to do that," said Honea. "Thank you very, very much for what you're doing, being on this pointy end, ready to surge at any moment."

Following the all hands call, CNO and MCPON visited the crew and shipyard maintenance team of the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Hawaii (SSN 776) and triad of the USS Minnesota (SSN 783) to congratulate them on their successful maintenance periods.

"Central to my America's Warfighting Navy is the need to put more players on the field, and that applies to our submarines," said Franchetti. "I know that we can't deter and win against our would-be adversaries without getting all our submarines on the field. Whether it's new construction ships or those in maintenance, we need to get these platforms in and out of the shipyard on time and on cost. And, we have to get all the people – with the right skills, tools and training – to man our submarines. That's all more players on the field, and you did that. I am so proud of you for all that you accomplished."

Franchetti and Honea also visited the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Illinois (SSN 786) to meet with the crew and congratulate them on their success in the maintenance period and with the "Every Sailor a Recruiter" program. Since the CNO's call to action earlier this year, the crew of

Illinois has found, coached, and mentored 11 future Sailors to get contracts and join the Navy, the highest number for any command, with the USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) in second place with 10.

“The crew of the USS Illinois is extremely motivated and focused on excellence in all mission areas which also includes investing in their warfighter development with their high completion rate of the Enlisted Leader Development course,” said Honea. “Illinois exemplifies the culture of excellence, and I’m not surprised they fully embraced ‘Every Sailor is a Recruiter’ and excelled at it as well. The crew exudes the ship’s motto ‘None More Brave.’ They know who makes a great teammate and recruits and mentors them to ensure our Navy has the most lethal combat warfighters. I am extremely proud of them and happy that CNO and I were able to present them with a small token of appreciation for their hard work.”

After visiting the submarines CNO and MCPON visited the K. Mark Takai Pacific Warfighting Center on Ford Island, the command-and-control center for RIMPAC, observing more than 250 watchstanders from the Joint and Combined Forces participating in the exercise. CNO and MCPON also met with senior naval leaders from several Allied and partner nations, to include Australia, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the Republic of Singapore.

“The United States is an Indo-Pacific nation. We know that our partnerships in this region make a difference—that friendship is strength. We don’t take that for granted,” said Franchetti. “It’s great to be out here working together with all of you. This is an incredible opportunity to continue to build interoperability across the entire maritime domain from humanitarian assistance, logistics, anti-submarine warfare all the way up to the highest end of combat training.”

Finally, CNO and MCPON flew out to a number of ships participating in RIMPAC. They visited the Republic of Korea

ship ROKS Cheon Ja Bong (LST-687), the Japanese ship JS Kunisaki (LST-4003), and the Royal New Zealand ship HMNZS Aotearoa (A-11), where they thanked service members, met with leadership, and observed the exercise first-hand.

“It was great to be able visit these ships, see their RIMPAC experiences, talk to them about what they are hoping to get out of the exercise, and thank them for being here and taking on some key leadership roles in the exercise,” said Franchetti.

In its 29th iteration, dating back to 1971, the biennial event is the world’s largest international joint exercise in the maritime environment, providing a unique training opportunity to foster and sustain cooperative relationships critical to ensuring security on the world’s oceans. Capabilities exercised during RIMPAC range from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex warfighting.

This was Franchetti’s first time attending RIMPAC as CNO.