

CNO Visits Indo-Pacific for Second Time, Strengthens Regional Ties



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti, Chief of the Royal Australian Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond and Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff speak on a panel at the Indian Ocean Defense and Security (IODS) Conference, July 24, 2024. During Franchetti's visit to Australia she met with consulate leadership, held a first-ever trilateral Chief of Navy engagement on AUKUS with Chief of the Royal Australian Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond and Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, and spoke at the Indian Ocean Defense and Security Conference. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 William Spears)
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MANILA – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Lisa Franchetti visited Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM); Perth, Australia; and Manila, Philippines, to meet with partner navies, government and military leaders, and attend the 2024 Indian Ocean Defense & Security (IODS) Conference, July 21-26.

The international trip began in Pohnpei, FSM where CNO held an all hands call with Sailors assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 and Marines assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 13, and thanked them for their hard work and commitment to the region.

“Thank you for serving on the Navy-Marine Corps team in a very strategic location and so far from home. The work that you’re doing here is vitally important to our Nation,” said Franchetti. “We’re never going to do anything alone. We are always going to operate with Allies and partners, and each of you are ambassadors and diplomats for the United States. Your

presence and your efforts send a message of deterrence to our adversaries and a message of reassurance to our Allies and partners.”

While in Pohnpei CNO visited the Nan Madol cultural heritage site, held meetings with Amb. Jennifer Johnson, U.S. Ambassador to FSM and Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander, Joint Task Force-Micronesia, as well as with FSM Vice President Aren Palik and FSM Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Lorin Robert.

Franchetti then flew with Johnson and Palik to Chuuk, FSM and met with Hon. Mekioshy William, Lt. Gov. of Chuuk. During [these engagements](#), Franchetti emphasized how the U.S. and FSM’s shared commitment to their longstanding defense and security ties, underpinned by the Compact of Free Association, support freedom, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

“It’s an honor to be here at such a historic time in the relationship between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia,” said Franchetti. “We have a longstanding partnership, and the renewal of the Compact of Free Association provides many opportunities for economic prosperity and security for both our countries. It will help advance our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Franchetti then traveled to Perth, Australia to visit HMAS Stirling, which will play a role in Australia’s future fleet of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines as home to Submarine Rotational Force – West, and hold the [first-ever trilateral meeting of the AUKUS Chiefs of Navy](#). Chief of the Royal Australian Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond, Royal Navy First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff Adm. Sir Ben Key, and Franchetti communicated their shared commitment to the historic agreement.

“AUKUS is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring together

the exceptional capabilities of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. We will continue to build on our relationship, strengths, and interoperability, while at the same time uplifting the industrial bases of our three countries,” said Franchetti. “We will bring to bear the innovative spirit of our three nations while significantly bolstering our posture in the Indo-Pacific, contributing to security and stability, and maintaining the rules-based international order in this critical region and around the globe.”

The three Heads of Navy also spoke on two panels at the IODS conference where they discussed [AUKUS and Security in the Indian Ocean](#) and [Naval Cooperation and Security in the Indo-Pacific](#).

“The Indian Ocean is a critical waterway for the free flow of resources, trade, and commerce all around the globe,” Franchetti said. “It’s important that we work together as Allies and partners to promote the rules-based international order that has supported freedom of navigation – in all oceans – and our collective prosperity for the last three quarters of a century.”

While at the conference, CNO conducted bi-lateral engagements with her counterpart in the [Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force](#), Adm. Akira Saito, as well as her counterpart in the [Republic of Singapore Navy](#), Rear Adm. Sean Wat.

Following her engagements in Australia, CNO traveled to Manila, Philippines, where she met with Amb. MaryKay Carlson and her U.S. Embassy Manila country team as well as Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., and Philippine Navy Flag Officer-in-Command Vice Adm. Toribio Adaci Jr. While there Franchetti [expressed steadfast U.S. support for the Philippines](#).

“The U.S. commitment to the Philippines is ironclad and our Maritime Cooperative Activities are a testament to the strength and importance of our relationship,” said Franchetti. “I look forward to building on the success of exercises Balikatan and Sama Sama to increase our interoperability and accelerate our capability to support our shared interests in this critical region.”

This was Franchetti’s first trip to FSM, Australia, and the Philippines as Chief of Naval Operations and her second trip to the Indo-Pacific to communicate the strategic importance of this region to the globe.