

Navy Selects Mobile, Ala., Company to Scrap World's First Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier



The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier ex-USS Enterprise is shown being moved to Newport News Shipbuilding in 2013 following its decommissioning in 2012. (NHHC)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has selected NorthStar Maritime Dismantlement Services LLC, a company with facilities in Mobile, Alabama, to scrap the former USS Enterprise (CVN 65), the Navy's – and the world's – first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

The Defense Department said in a May 30 contract announcement that NorthStar, headquartered in Vernon, Vermont, was being

awarded a \$536.7 million firm-fixed-price contract from the Naval Sea Systems Command for “the dismantling, recycling, and disposal of Ex-Enterprise (CVN 65).

“Under this contract CVN 65 will be dismantled in its entirety, and all resulting materials will be properly recycled or disposed of. Specifically, hazardous materials, including low-level radioactive waste, will be packaged and safely transported for disposal at authorized licensed sites,” the announcement said. “Work will be performed in Mobile, Alabama, and is expected to be completed by November 2029.”

The Ex-Enterprise, commissioned in 1961, served the nation in numerous crises and conflicts, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam War, and Operations Frequent Wind, Earnest Will, Desert Fox, Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

The carrier was deactivated in December 2012 and, when its nuclear reactors were defueled, it was decommissioned in February 2017. The hull remained at Newport News Shipbuilding at Newport News, Virginia, awaiting the Navy’s plans for disposal.

“NorthStar is partnered with Modern American Recycling and Radiological Services, LLC (MARRS) in Mobile, Alabama, where the dismantlement work will take place,” the Naval Sea Systems Command said in a June 2 release posted on linkedin.com. “Waste Control Specialists LLC, of Andrews, Texas, will serve as the licensed facility for disposal of low-level radiological and mixed hazardous waste. Non-hazardous materials will be recycled or disposed of in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.”

The Navy’s selection of a commercial company to dismantle nuclear-powered ship is a change from its normal practice of scrapping nuclear-powered ships, which heretofore included nuclear-powered submarines and cruisers. In recent years, the

Navy's Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington, has been the facility that has handled the tasks.

"By leveraging private-sector expertise in commercial nuclear power plant decommissioning, the Navy is achieving an estimated \$1 billion in cost savings compared to conducting the effort in public shipyards, the Navy release said. "This approach enables the Navy to prioritize public yard resources toward fleet readiness and modernization – while upholding its longstanding commitment to environmental stewardship and nuclear safety."