



NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

APRIL 2023
Volume 7, Issue 4

DOWN THE VOICEPIPE *do you hear there!*



COMING UP

NLWA Executive meeting 03rd. July 2023
at 1700

HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation
Executive meeting Saturday 60 h. May
2023 at 1000

Facility open each Wednesday morning
0900-1200

HMAS PERTH (III)
Anzac day 2023
Lest we forget

ALL ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THIS
NEWSLETTER ARE PRINTED IN GOOD
FAITH AND DON'T NECESSARY REFLECT
THE VIEWS OF THE
NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA



Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division News update



ANZAC Day came and went and the various services that make up the day have been held. It is exceptionally pleasing to see the growing support from the masses, all out to acknowledge the fine members of our Defence Force and Allied Defence Forces and pay their respects to those who have fallen, not just in battle or captivity but those who have been fortunate enough to live a long life and have crossed the bar due to age. Sadly, we have no one left from WWI and we edge ever closer to having no one left from WWII.

Thankfully we still have memories to keep alive and many to honour including those from Korea, Vietnam and more recent conflicts. Despite an ever-ageing population it is worth noting that somewhere in the crowd will be some of tomorrow's Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen, all keen to keep alive the spirit of a proud nations military history.

To give you a brief update on the memorial, it gives me great pleasure to announce that phase two, the main section of the memorial is about to get underway and it is hoped the concrete slab will be poured sometime between now and the next newsletter (all going to plan).

Those familiar with our facility might be interested to know that another round of painting has been completed, some outside under the patio, some inside and the results speak for themselves, breathing yet another breath of fresh air into a building no-one would realise is over 60 years of age.

As an Executive Committee we are so very pleased to see the facility being used and enjoyed by so many nowadays.

A few of us are soon to head to HMAS STIRLING to see HMAS PERTH III presented with the Duke of Gloucester Cup, recognising just one of a myriad of awards and accolades the ship has won in the past year. Of note, PERTH III's CO Commander Tony Nagle received this award back in 2020 whilst in command of HMAS ARUNTA. Some photos and information to come in next month's newsletter.

Until next month

Brad





HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL UPDATE

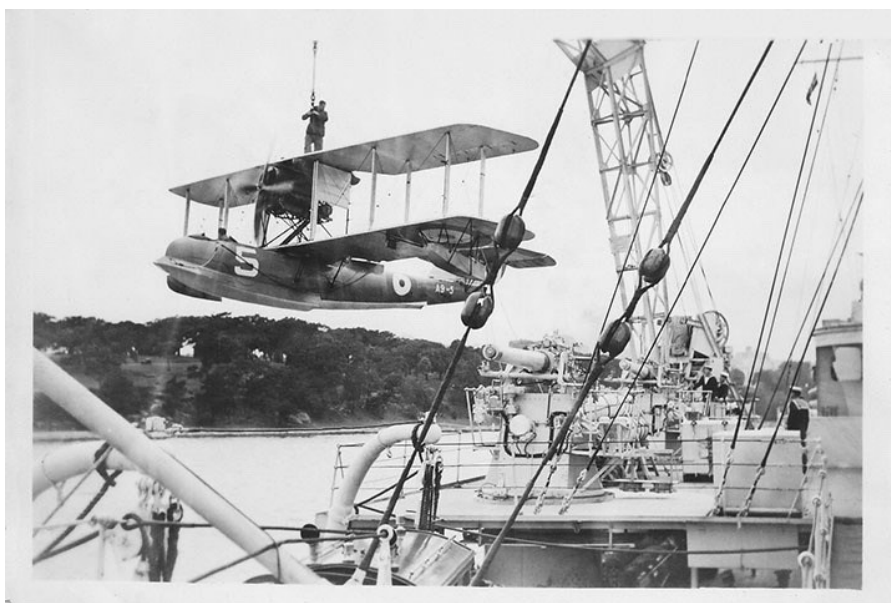
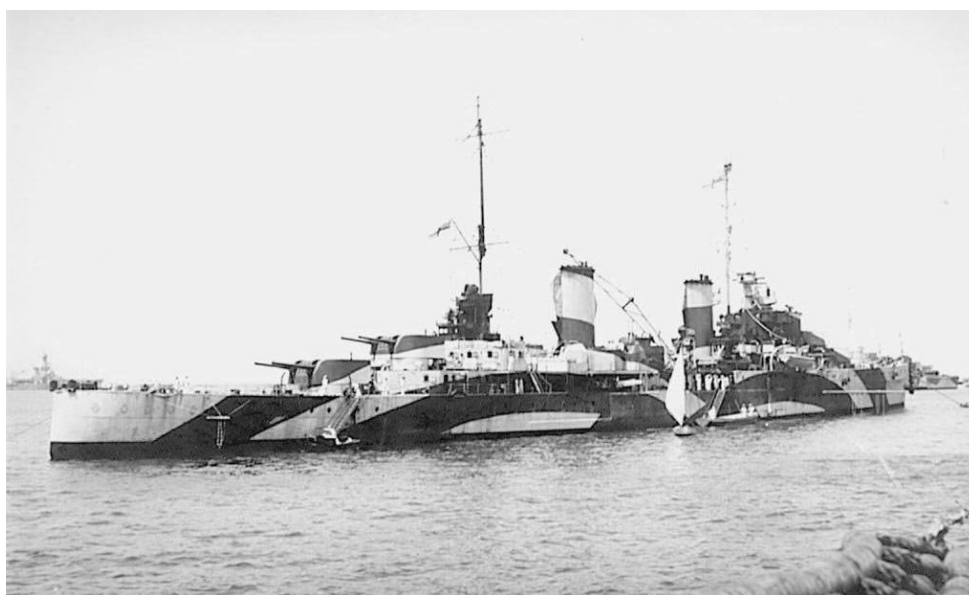
Incorporating NLWA and the HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation Incorporated



Jim O'Neill
CMDR ANC RTD
Project Manager

The final piece of the jigsaw is now coming together. A critical business meeting will be held this coming Wednesday with the main contractors to go over the final engineering and plans to complete the Memorial. I am very happy to announce that the concrete and pour has been sponsored by SRG Global Concrete. Which we are most grateful to receive. Sponsorship is also sought from interested companies to supply the ceiling, roofing and electrical which will ensure the completion of the final stage. It is anticipated if all goes smoothly the memorial will be completed by late October so we can plan the official opening on March 1st 2024 the 82nd. Anniversary of the sinking of HMAS PERTH (I). Further news on this when we are further down the track.

On recently observation several passer buyers have asked if there would be an Anzac service held at the memorial. This will certainly be looked at for next year and will be discussed at executive level.



Almost 1,000 Australians went down with this ship. 80 years later, its wreck has been found

The Montevideo Maru went down in July 1942 with more than 900 Australians onboard. Some say the discovery of its wreck "closes a terrible chapter" in military history.



The Montevideo Maru was a Japanese passenger ship. Source: Supplied / Australian War Memorial

The Montevideo Maru sank in July 1942 with more than 900 Australian prisoners on board.

The Japanese carrier ship's wreckage was discovered off the coast of the Philippines earlier this month.

No artefacts or human remains will be removed from the wreckage.

It was sunk by a United States submarine during

[World War Two](#)

in one of the worst international maritime disasters in history.

Now 80 years later, the wreck of a Japanese transport ship that was carrying more than 1,000 prisoners — most of whom were Australian — when it went down, has been discovered off the coast of the Philippines.

An expedition team, led by Australian businessman, maritime history philanthropist, explorer, and director of not-for-profit Silentworld Foundation, John Mullen, found the Montevideo Maru's wreck earlier this month.

"The discovery of the Montevideo Maru closes a terrible chapter in international military and maritime history," Mr Mullen said.

"Families waited years for news of their missing loved ones, before learning of the tragic outcome of the sinking. Some never fully came to accept that their loved ones were among the victims.

"By finding the vessel, we hope to bring closure to the many families devastated by this terrible disaster."

Who died in the Montevideo Maru disaster?

The Montevideo Maru was carrying approximately 1,060 prisoners of war and civilians when it was torpedoed by the USS Sturgeon on 1 July 1942.

The crew of the American submarine were unaware citizens of Allied nations, who had been captured in the fall of Rabaul in New Guinea a few months earlier, were on board the ship at the time.

An estimated 979 Australians died in what became the nation's worst maritime disaster, alongside 33 crew from Norwegian freighter the Herstein and 20 Japanese guards and crew.

At least 14 nations were impacted by the tragedy, including Australia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Japan, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, Solomon Islands, Sweden, and the US.

How was the Montevideo Maru's wreck found?

The mission to find the location of Montevideo Maru's wreck was devised by Silentworld Foundation and Dutch deep-sea survey specialist company Fugro, with support from Australia's Department of Defence.

They began the search on 6 April in the South China Sea, 110km north-west of the Philippines' largest and most populous island, Luzon.

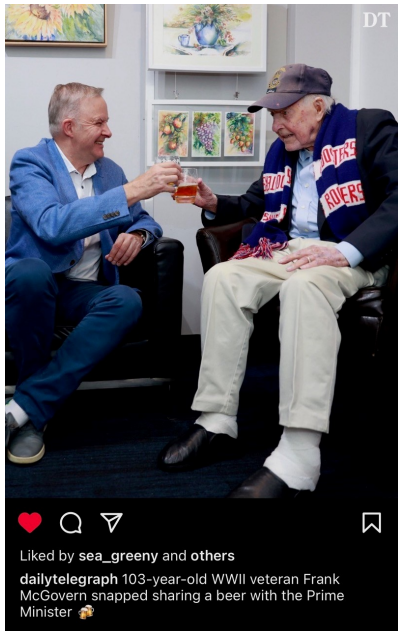
A positive sighting at a depth of more than 4,000 metres was recorded after just 12 days, using state-of-the-art technology.

The wreck of the Montevideo Maru was discovered off the coast of the Philippines. Source: Supplied / Silentworld Foundation

The wreck then had to be verified using expert analysis from a team of maritime archaeologists, conservators, operations and research specialists, and ex-naval officers.

No artefacts or human remains will be removed from the wreckage, Silent World Foundation said, with the site to be recorded for research purposes.

"I am proud to be the citizen of a country that never forgets or stops looking for those lost in the course of duty, no matter how many years may pass," Mr Mullen said.



Navy set for major shake-up, just in a couple of months' time



24 APRIL 2023 By: **Stephen Kuper**

The Albanese government has released its long-awaited Defence Strategic Review, with major impacts across the Australian Defence Force, yet Navy is set for another review to shape its future force structure.

As an island nation, Australia's sovereignty, security, and prosperity is intrinsically linked to our maritime surrounds and the uncontested and unmolested access to the global maritime commons.

Recognising this fundamental strategic and tactical reality, the Albanese government's Defence Strategic Review has moved to reshape the Royal Australian Navy into a flexible, future-proofed force capable of meeting the tactical and strategic operational requirements placed upon the service by the nation's policy makers.

At the core of this renewed emphasis, the review states, "Australia's Navy must be optimised for operating Australia's immediate region and for the security of our sea lines of communication and maritime trade".

To this end, the government reinforced its commitment to the SSN0-AUKUS arrangement and its intent to field and build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, however, by far, the most important announcement by the government was the announcement that the Royal Australian Navy's surface fleet would be undergoing a "short, sharp" review into the constitution of its force structure to support the delivery of "impactful projection".

The review articulates this as, "An enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, that complements a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet, is now essential given our changed strategic circumstances."

Delivering this, the government and the review believes such a force structure should incorporate "Tier 1" and "Tier 2" surface combatants to provide for "increased strike, air defence, presence operations and anti-submarine warfare".

Going further, the review reinforces this, "Enhancing Navy's capability in long-range strike (maritime and land), air defence, and anti-submarine warfare requires the acquisition of a contemporary optimal mix of Tier 1 and Tier 2 surface combatants, consistent with a strategy of a larger number of small surface vessels."

Royal Navy decommissions HMS Montrose

April 18, 2023, by Jasmina Ovcina Mandra

After a 30-year career, the active life of the Royal Navy's warship HMS Montrose came to an end on Monday in Portsmouth.

Nearly 200 members of her ship's company turned to face the vessel as the White Ensign was lowered on her flight deck and the frigate passed into history.



Image credit: Royal Navy

*"It's been a truly special occasion officially decommissioning this fine ship after 30 years' service to both her monarchs and her country," Commander **Claire Thompson** said. "As the final ship's company it is with immense pride that we lowered the Ensign today and we did it on behalf of the thousands of men and women who have had the privilege of calling HMS Montrose home."* Some crew will stay with Montrose through the decommissioning process as the ship is prepared for disposal – her ultimate fate has yet to be determined – while others will begin dispersing around the rest of the Royal Navy. Based in Plymouth for the vast majority of her career, Montrose was the seventh ship in the class of 16 Duke-class frigates to be laid down (back in 1989) and the eighth to be commissioned (1994).

There are few parts of the world the frigate has not seen in her 29-year active life as she clocked up more than 400,000 miles on duties at home and overseas. Most recently she has spent four years constantly deployed on operations, almost exclusively in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. During that time, Montrose made ten drug busts seizing 16 tonnes of illegal narcotics, seized illegal shipments of missiles and cruise missile engines, and helped safely guide some 130 merchant vessels through potentially dangerous maritime choke points.

The ship returned to Devonport in December last year.

Since then she has operated around the UK and paid a farewell visit to her namesake town in northeastern Scotland.

As a general-duty frigate she will be replaced by one of the five Type 31 Inspiration-class frigates under construction in Rosyth. The first, HMS Venturer, is due in the water later this year.



Future LCS Cleveland launches, strikes tugboat

By [Geoff Ziezulewicz](#)
Thursday, Apr 20



The future littoral combat ship Cleveland struck a tugboat during its ceremonial launch Saturday at Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Wisconsin. No one was injured in the mishap, but officials said the LCS suffered damage. (Screenshot/YouTube) The Navy's future littoral combat ship Cleveland launched with a literal bang Saturday, when it collided with a supporting tugboat in the Menominee River at Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin, officials said.

No one was injured during the "unintentional contact," but the future LCS's botched christening caused limited damage to Cleveland, the last of the troubled Freedom-class ships. "The damaged area is well above the waterline and no flooding occurred," Naval Sea Systems Command spokeswoman Jamie Koehler said in an email. "An assessment was completed and permanent repairs are being planned. Root cause of the incident is currently under investigation by the Navy and shipbuilder."

The Navy has not said when Cleveland will be commissioned, but a Pentagon release ahead of the christening noted that Saturday's "side-launch" would be the last at the Wisconsin shipyard, with follow-on ships being launched using a shiplift system. To date, the ship class has failed to ever take on the missions envisaged for it earlier this century, agile, fast warships operating in coastal waters to hunt and destroy enemy submarines, eliminate anti-ship mines and defend the fleet from attacks by small boats. Questions linger about how such a ship would contribute in a shooting war with China.

The Freedom-class LCS has suffered from [a class-wide transmission issue](#), while some ships in the Independence variant have suffered from hull cracks.

As the Navy and other services focus on a potential future fight with China, the sea service has sought to decommission LCSs early, including some that were in service for less than a decade.

Some have successfully taken on West Pacific presence patrols and counter-narcotics missions around South America and the Caribbean.



HOW JAPAN COULD QUICKLY BUILD UP ITS SUBMARINE FORCE

By **Bradley Perrett** - April 19, 2023



The Japanese submarine JS Soryu underway, date unknown (Photo: Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force)

Japan can quickly and inexpensively increase its force of diesel-electric combat submarines from 22 to at least 28, if it stops prematurely retiring them.

That would provide more of the one category of warship that the armed forces of democratic countries could safely operate close to China in wartime. Moreover, additional Japanese submarines would ease pressure on the US Navy, which is straining to maintain submarine numbers. Last month, Japan decommissioned the first of its 11 Oyashio-class boats. They are contemporaries of Australia's Collins-class, which Canberra is not remotely close to withdrawing from service.

JS *Oyashio* was 25 years old [upon decommissioning] and was only 17 when pulled from the combat force to be converted into a training submarine. Most navies would regard that as waste, just as most air forces would not follow Japan's policy of discarding F-15 fighters that are nowhere near worn out.

Japan's early decommissioning of submarines seems especially improvident given the importance of its boats in helping to deter a Chinese attack on Taiwan. They are based near China and are operated by people highly experienced in the waters that would be the main naval theatre in such a conflict

.Consider, for example, the results of table-top simulations of a Taiwanese war published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington in January. Japan's forces in the games suffered initial blows, prompting the researchers to report that Japanese submarines were the "most valuable," as they could "strike Chinese amphibious ships and the Chinese picket line around Taiwan."

“Converting a submarine for training every few years involves removing combat equipment, much reducing Japan’s warfighting capability.

For decades, Japan has almost always built a submarine a year. The current and planned fleet is 22 plus two: 22 for operations, including one routinely assigned to development work but presumably fully armed, and two converted for training. On average, they’ll be retiring after about 24 years in service.

Elsewhere, submarine service lives of 30 years are unremarkable.

If Japan suspended submarine retirements for six years and raised the average decommissioning age to 30, it would increase its fleet by six boats without having to spend even one more yen on construction. It could enlarge the fleet at a rate of one a year.

Using each submarine for 32 years would enlarge the fleet by eight. The US Navy has found that its Los Angeles-class nuclear submarines are good for 36 years.

The idea of keeping Japanese submarines going for longer is not new. US Congressional Research Service analyst Ronald O’Rourke said in 2020 that the number one opportunity to expand the naval power of the US and its allies was by enlarging Japan’s submarine force. And in 2021,

I proposed that, since Japan planned to throw away the Oyashios before they were worn out, they’d make fine temporary additions to the Royal Australian Navy while it awaited delivery of nuclear submarines.

Keeping the remaining Oyashios in Japanese service would be much more valuable.

Japan has expanded its fleet once before by lengthening service lives. The fleet target of 22 plus two, achieved last year, was set in 2010 when Japan had 18 boats (16 plus two) and retired them generally before they got to even 20 years.

Another immediate opportunity is for Japan to end its practice of dedicating two submarines to training. A Japanese naval source says that converting a boat for that purpose every few years involves removing combat equipment, much reducing its warfighting capability.

Other navies teach sailors the ropes in front line submarines. If Japan did that, it could add two submarines to its combat force without lifting the building rate. So, a quick addition of 10 submarines to the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force is quite conceivable.

Japan would have to train enough people for one extra crew each year, though that should not be difficult. It was doing that several years ago as it lifted the force to 22 plus two.

It would also need expanded maintenance capacity, additional weapons such as torpedoes, and a larger budget to cover running costs. But the biggest additional financial burden may be in shipyard work.

The 2010 decision to operate the submarines for longer required life-extending overhauls for the Oyashios, which began in 2013 and were followed by modernisation to almost the standard of the succeeding Soryu-class, according to Japan’s government. If Japan lifts the submarine retirement age to 30 or 32, its submarines will presumably need more or deeper overhauls and modernisation. That would cost much less than new submarines.

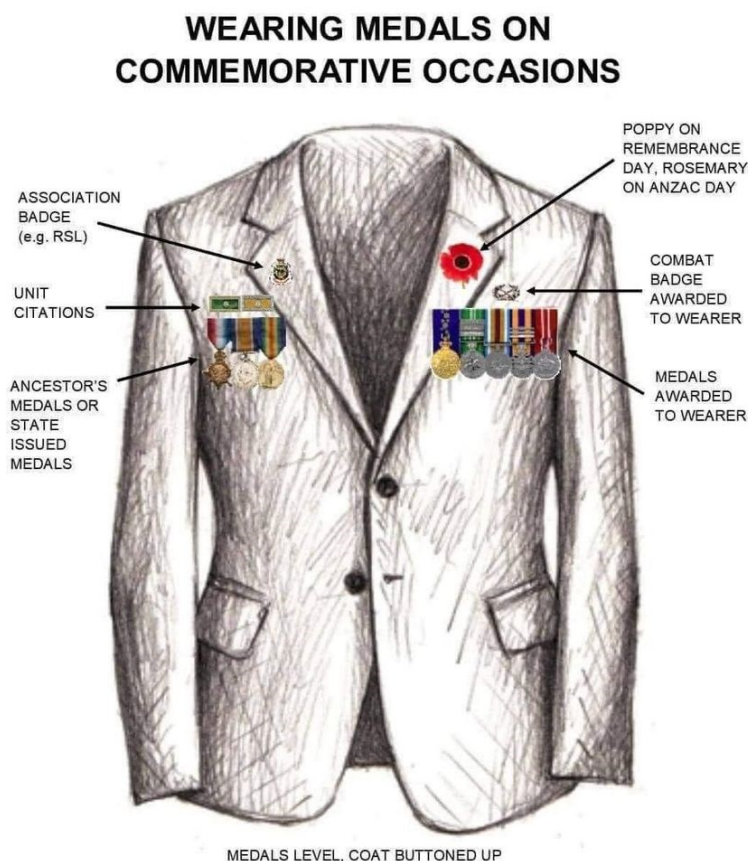
“If Washington, in seeking to deter China, values undersea strength as highly as it seems to, it needs to tell Japan to stop throwing away good submarines.”

But, however well modernised, will diesel-electric submarines continue to be useful? Peter Dutton, who was defence minister when Australia decided in 2021 it needed nuclear-powered submarines, wrote last year that the advice from experts was clear. Diesel-electric submarines would not be able to compete in hostilities in the South China Sea beyond 2035. The diesel-electric submarine needs to come up near to the surface to “snort”—raising a snorkel to run its diesel engines and recharge its batteries—and would be detected by emerging radar technologies, Dutton said.

That assessment should not discourage Japan from extending the service lives of its diesel-electric submarines. That would yield a larger Japanese fleet well before 2035, which cannot be regarded as a sharp turning point at which the conventionally-powered submarine concept will suddenly become obsolete. Such changes come gradually.

Also, Japanese submarines would operate in wartime not so much in the South China Sea, where the presence of Chinese airborne radar surveillance might be uncontested, but mainly in the East China Sea and nearby waters, close to Japanese and Taiwanese air bases. And all Japanese submarines delivered since 2009 (after the Oyashio-class) have either air-independent propulsion systems or large-capacity lithium-ion batteries enabling them to “loiter”. Both technologies allow a commander to reduce or entirely avoid snorting in dangerous locations. Australia’s previously planned diesel-electric submarines lacked such features.

Although Japan plans to double its defence share of GDP to two per cent by 2027, a force structure plan issued in December confirmed that the 22-plus-two submarine fleet size would stay. Why the government and navy rejected the possibility of further expansion is unclear. Possible explanations include competition within the navy for funds or a simply a disinclination to accept



Ship fires cost the Navy dearly, but lessons still need learning

By [Diana Stancy Correll](#)

Wednesday, Apr 26



Sailors and federal firefighters combat a fire onboard Bonhomme Richard at Naval Base San Diego on July 12, 2020. (MC3 Christina Ross/Navy)

Fires aboard Navy ships, especially those in maintenance, have cost the service billions of dollars since 2008 — yet the service hasn't consistently implemented a system to collect and analyze lessons learned from these disasters, according to a [Government Accountability Office report](#).

The auditors determined that between 2008 and 2020, the Navy reported \$4 billion in damages due to fires on ships undergoing maintenance.

Two Navy ships had to be scrapped.

In May 2012, a major fire aboard the attack submarine Miami while it was undergoing maintenance at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, caused more than \$700 million in estimated damages to its forward compartment, the report notes. Rather than pay for repairs, the Navy was forced to decommission the boat 10 years ahead of schedule.

Then in July 2020, the [amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard](#), which was undergoing a maintenance availability in San Diego, caught fire and burned for four days, doing massive damage to the flattop's flight deck, island, mast and lower levels. The amphib had just completed \$250 million worth of upgrades to support integration of the F-35B Lightning II at the time of the fire, one of four large-deck amphibis to be updated for the new aircraft.

Fixing it would have cost between \$2.5 to \$3.2 billion over five to seven years, service officials determined. Ultimately, the Navy [decommissioned the ship in April 2021](#) and sent it off to Texas to be scrapped.

"After the loss of the USS Miami, the Navy realized that it could not afford another setback from a fire of this magnitude," the GAO report states. "Navy officials recognized a need to raise the Navy's standards and capabilities to improve fire safety, and to develop cost-effective solutions to improve fire prevention and detection, immediate response, and extended response for ships undergoing maintenance."

Even so, nine additional major fires occurred aboard ships undergoing maintenance over the next decade.

"For example, in 2015 a fire aboard the USS Gunston Hall at the NASSCO Earl Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia, resulted in an estimated \$26 million in repairs and extended the vessel's maintenance period by 2 months," according to the report. Further, in 2018, a fire aboard the USS Oscar Austin at the BAE Systems shipyard in Norfolk, Virginia, resulted in an estimated \$75 million in damages, according to Navy officials." Since the Bonhomme Richard conflagration, the Navy has incurred at least \$669,000 in damages from additional fire incidents during maintenance periods through December 2022, according to data from the Naval Safety Command.

The GAO auditors examined Navy documents and reports, best practices, policies and procedures, and fire safety training materials for the report. They also interviewed Navy fire safety and prevention officials and visited ships undergoing maintenance. Ships in the yard are especially susceptible to fire since repairs involving welding, electrical sparks or other sources can ignite flammable materials in confined spaces. While the report found the Navy has organizations focused on collecting and analyzing data regarding fires, there is no uniform process currently in place across the fleet to examine this information and share lessons learned.

"Although the Navy has begun improving the collection of data related to fires aboard ships during maintenance in the Navy's safety database, no organization is analyzing the broad effects of fires on the Navy's operations and strategic resources," the GAO report said. "Without conducting such analyses, the Navy will not have a complete picture of the magnitude of risks associated with ship fires."

Moreover, although the organizations GAO interviewed collected lessons learned from fires — to include best practices, corrective actions, action items and recommendations — they had not "consistently used the approved Navy-wide system to store and share them."

In addition, auditors found that the Navy "has not set service-wide goals, performance measures, and a process to monitor progress for its collective training efforts to improve fire safety and response," the report said. "By establishing these practices service-wide, Navy leadership would have the information needed to determine the extent to which its training efforts are effective in reducing the incidence and severity of fires."



Australian defence-industry reps disappointed with DSR

24/04/2023 Posted by Brian Hartigan 5108 Views 4 Comments Defence Strategic Review

Australia's peak industry body representing small and medium defence-industry companies – Australian Industry and Defence Network (AIDN) – says it is concerned about an apparent emphasis on speed over sovereignty in today's Defence Strategic Review.

A spokesperson for AIDN said the representative body welcomed the release of the review and acknowledged the hard work of Dr Stephen Smith and Sir Angus Houston – but, go on to say that references to sovereign defence industry appeared cursory at best in the report.

"AIDN is calling for the Albanese Government and the Department of Defence to work closely with the 61,000+ workers employed by Australian defence industry to ensure that a comprehensive policy-and-procurement framework are put in place to achieve this intent," the spokesperson said.

"However, the DSR does not affirm this position.

"The references to defence industry [in the DSR] appear cursory at best.

"Of concern is the statement that Australian industry content and domestic production should be balanced against timely capability acquisition.

"The Albanese Government needs to clearly articulate what they believe 'timely acquisition' is – and it needs to articulate what the industrial plan for Australian industry is to be.

"AIDN can accept that the requirement for a capability may mean Defence proceeds offshore to purchase that capability, but, there must be a plan to ensure that the ability to produce the capability locally is developed at the same time – and it must be mandatory.

"Without the proper guidance from government, Defence will be able to use the argument of speed to capability to avoid the use of Australian industry.

"The future of Australian defence industry depends on a framework where their role in delivering capability requirements is clear, and the procurement process is efficient and accessible to local industry, especially SMEs.

"Allowing internationally owned large Defence contractors the ability to provide advice to Defence on 'speed to capability' without due regard or requirement for work to be transferred to Australian industry, means that the these overseas companies will simply use the 'speed to capability' mantra to employ their existing overseas supply chains – and thus there will be no development, enhancement or creation of an Australian indigenous sovereign industrial capability, a capability our nation requires in order to achieve national strategic resilience."

AIDN said the creation of Australian capability would allow us as a nation to be independent, sovereign and resilient, and could and should provide a secondary manufacturing and supply capability for our strategic partners.

"If Australia is to achieve a truly sovereign industrial base, then Australian defence industry must be designed into every aspect of these programs.

"If the intent is simply to acquire capability from foreign-owned industries, then our nation will have fallen short of what we need to create with our own industry.

"Australian industry is simply too important to be left to the whims of foreign-owned multinationals.

"AIDN would argue that now is the time for our government to mandate requirements into all of these programs so that foreign entities understand what they must do in order to secure these opportunities.

"This is not an isolated requirement – most nations have exacting requirements for the inclusion of local defence industry into their programs."



New anti-ship missile protection for Aussie ships

05/05/2023 Posted by Brian Hartigan 474 Views 0 Comments [MASS](#), [Rheinmetall](#)

The Australian government has committed \$180million over the next five years to modernise the anti-ship missile defence capabilities on Royal Australian Navy ships.

Rheinmetall photo

Rheinmetall Defence Australia signed a contract to build Multi-Ammunition Softkill System (MASS) to equip Anzac-class frigates and Hobart-class destroyers with anti-ship missile protection.

Minister for Defence Industry Pat Conroy said it was great to visit the Brisbane facility where this exciting new system will be [developed*] with support from a number of local companies.

"This investment will not only keep our sailors safe, but also lead to a smarter, stealthier navy, able to protect Australia's interests in our current strategic environment," Minister Conroy said.

"We are investing in [sovereign capabilities*] and working with local industry to ensure our Defence personnel have the capability they need to keep Australians safe."

Produced by Rheinmetall of Germany, MASS is connected to the ship's sensors and protects ships by launching decoys that operate in all relevant electromagnetic wavelengths – ultraviolet, electro-optical, laser, infrared and radar.

Anti-torpedo ammunitions can also be used without modification to the system.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Rheinmetall Defence Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of German Defence prime Rheinmetall. MASS is a German-designed off-the-shelf system, already in service on more than 300 ships world wide. To intimate that it is a [sovereign capability*] or [developed*] in Brisbane is disingenuous, in my opinion.*



Defence confirms undersea support vessel

By Ben Felton | Canberra | 11 April 2023

Over the weekend Defence confirmed the acquisition of ADV *Guidance*, formerly MV *Normand Jarl*, to serve as a dedicated Undersea Support Vessel for the Royal Australian Navy. In a statement, Defence said that the vessel would be used to support trials of emerging undersea surveillance technologies.

The vessel will support both crewed and uncrewed undersea platforms as well as multiple robotic and autonomous systems. *ADM* understands that the ship, bought for \$110 million, will arrive in Australia from Singapore sometime during Q3 2023.

Guidance is expected to support a wide range of projects, programs and operations during its military service. Minister for Defence Industry, Pat Conroy, said that the ship would support the rollout of the Navy's Robotics, Autonomous Systems and Artificial Intelligence (RAS-AI) strategy as well as undersea initiatives that makeup AUKUS pillars one and two.

"The Albanese Government is determined to build the capability the Australian Defence Force needs for the circumstances we face," Conroy stated. "ADV *Guidance* will provide a platform to support the development, trialling, and delivery of undersea systems, including Navy's robotic and autonomous undersea capability, and support efforts under AUKUS."

ADM also understands that the decision to buy a commercial vessel and convert it into the Undersea Support Vessel was taken in March 2022, before Labor came to power. The selection and purchase of *Guidance*, however, likely took place under the purview of the new government.

Brent Clark, CEO of the Australian Industry and Defence Network (AIDN), said that it was "disappointing" that the government had again decided to buy a vessel from offshore - as it did with ADV *Reliant* and ADV *Ocean Protector*.

"AIDN finds it disappointing to see the procurement of a commercial capability from offshore that could have been sourced in Australia. It is these types of programs that ensure that the Australian workforce enhances their skill levels to ensure that they can deliver more complex programs such as nuclear submarines. If we continue to acquire capability from overseas, then it seems unlikely that the Government can create a sovereign and indigenous industrial capability," Clark told *ADM*.

Guidance will likely play an important supporting role in ongoing projects to develop Australian uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUV) including Ghost Shark, SeaWolf and Speartooth. Programs such as Sea 1905, Maritime Mine Countermeasures and Military Survey, and Sea 5012 Phase 1, Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS), will also likely benefit from the vessel's dedicated undersea support capabilities and mission.

According to Defence, *Guidance's* modular design means that it is well-suited to a variety of roles, through the use of different personnel and equipment load-outs for different missions. Notably, the vessel is equipped with a moon pool, allowing the discreet operation of sensitive payloads. Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment, Tony Dalton, said that *Guidance* would be 'instrumental' in developing Defences' undersea capabilities.

"ADV *Guidance* will be instrumental in developing and testing robotic and autonomous underwater systems, ensuring Defence can compete and succeed in a wide variety of complex undersea environments," Dalton said.

ADM further understands that Teekay Shipping Australia will provide the core vessel crew for *Guidance* with additional Defence personnel embarking as necessary. *Guidance* will primarily operate out of Fleet Base East in Sydney, close to a variety of other Defence installations including RAAF Richmond and Holsworthy Barracks.

The acquisition of the new undersea support vessel was foreshadowed by *ADM* on 6 April.



New production milestone for Hunter program

5 April 2023

In a production milestone for the Hunter-class frigate program, the first constructed prototype block (Block 16) has been moved out of the block consolidation hall into the blast and paint chamber.

On 27 March, BAE Systems Australia started the ‘blast and paint’ process at the company's shipyard in Osborne, South Australia – a critical shipbuilding process led by subcontractor Altrad.

Block 16 is the first constructed prototype block, and BAE Systems Australia says construction is progressing at pace on the four subsequent prototype blocks. Block 16 weighs 141 tonnes and is 452 square metres.

According to BAE Systems Australia, the blast and paint process for Block 16 will take seven weeks: two weeks for blasting and then cleaning up the chamber, followed by five weeks of painting.

The total Block 16 surface that will be painted is nearly 4,600 square metres, with nearly 3,800 litres of paint estimated to be used to paint the interior and exterior of the block. The external paint finish is expected to last seven years, while the interior is expected to last up to 25 years.

“We’ve worked closely with the BAE Systems team to ensure we are ready to start the blast and paint process and we look forward to the challenge of Block 16,” Altrad Site Lead Jeremy Davies said. “The blast and paint chamber is state-of-the-art and there’s nothing like it elsewhere in Australia.

“We have provided our expertise during the facility commission stages into operational mode. Block 16 provides an opportunity to stretch the facility, optimise equipment settings, test our operational processes and procedures, and ensure ongoing operations are at their most efficient for the first batch of three frigates.”

Turkish Navy's largest warship TCG Anadolu enters service

April 10, 2023, by Fatima Bahtić

Turkish Navy has commissioned its flagship and largest naval vessel, amphibious assault ship TCG Anadolu, in Tuzla.

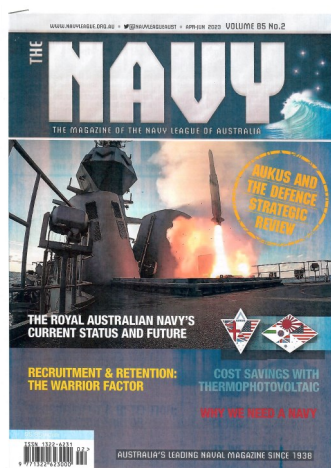


Turkish Ministry of National Defence

TCG Anadolu is the largest ship of the Turkish Navy with a length of 231 meters, a width of 32 meters and a displacement of 27,436 tons. The ship will have a top speed of 20.5 knots and a range of 9000 nautical miles when fully loaded.

The construction of the vessel began in April 2016, and the keel was laid in February 2018. The ship will carry out tasks such as sustaining long-endurance military combat or humanitarian relief operations. Furthermore, it will act as a command center and the navy's new flagship.

TCG Anadolu was designed by Navantia and built at Sedef Shipyard in Turkiye. The vessel started its sea acceptance tests in June last year.



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BEIJING CARRIES OUT CALIBRATED AIR AND SEA OPERATIONS OFF TAIWAN

By **Trevor Hollingsbee** - April 12, 2023



The People's Liberation Army Navy aircraft carrier Shandong with escorting ships underway in the South China Sea in the early autumn of 2022 (Photo: People's Liberation Army)

April 7 to 9 saw a further deployment of Chinese warships and warplanes around Taiwan. This move was in response to the official visit to the United States by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. Reports indicate that 11 warships and more than 70 aircraft were involved. According to Beijing, the operation simulated “encirclement” of Taiwan.

Official Chinese sources said that participating warships included Type 052C guided missile destroyers and Type 054A frigates. Taipei publicly identified one of the Chinese fleet as the Type 054A frigate *Xuzhou*.

There was a close-quarters confrontation between a Chinese warship, the Taiwanese frigate *Di Hua*, and a Taiwan Coast Guard Administration patrol ship, while a Chinese warship reportedly fired a single shot some distance off the Taiwanese coast.

Beijing has been heavily engaged in international diplomacy in recent weeks, however, and these latest Chinese operations off Taiwan appeared to have been carefully calibrated to minimise international reaction. Beijing announced the duration of the operations in advance, and while some Chinese warships crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait, it was only for brief periods and the ships refrained from overtly aggressive conduct.

Taiwanese warships, for their part, mostly monitored the operation from a distance of about nine kilometres, and Taipei's public comments were low key. Washington meanwhile re-affirmed its focus on Taiwan's security by dispatching the destroyer *Milius* on a Freedom of Navigation Operation in the Taiwan Strait.

Of particular significance, though, was the well-publicised deployment of one of China's two aircraft carriers, *Shandong*. The carrier and its escorts carried out operations to the east of Taiwan. According to regional reports, these operations included multiple missions by *Shandong*'s embarked J-15 fighter-bombers.

This was the first time that a Chinese carrier had been overtly deployed in support of Taiwan-focused operations. This development was seen by some analysts as probably signalling that the absorbing of Taiwan into the People's Republic of China is being afforded increasing priority by Beijing.

VESSEL REVIEW | AUGUSTE BENEBIG – VERSATILE FRENCH NAVY PATROL SHIP TO OPERATE OUT OF NEW CALEDONIA

By **Baird Maritime** - April 13, 2023



Photo: French Navy

The French Navy recently took delivery of the first in a new class of six offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) belonging to the Patrouilleur d’Outre-Mer (POM) class built by local shipyard Socarenam. The POM-class will replace the older P400-class patrol boats as the navy’s main forward-deployed vessels in France’s overseas territories.

Named after a New Caledonia-born, Free French naval infantryman who was decorated for his actions in World War II, POM-class lead ship *Auguste Benebig* will be operated out of New Caledonia. Its missions will include maritime patrol, marine environmental protection, fisheries enforcement, counter-narcotics trafficking, and search and rescue (SAR).



Photo: French Navy

The vessel has a length of 80 metres, a beam of 11.8 metres, a draught of 3.5 metres, a displacement of 1,300 tonnes, and space for 30 crewmembers and up to 29 additional personnel. The hybrid electric propulsion system can deliver a maximum speed of 24 knots and a range of 5,500 nautical miles. Operations are possible even in extreme heat, making the vessel suitable for the waters in and around some of France’s overseas island territories.

The POM-class vessels lack missile armament due to the less demanding nature of their maritime security missions. Weaponry is therefore limited to two 7.62mm machine guns, two 12.7mm machine guns, and a 20mm autocannon on a Nexter Narwhal remotely controlled mount at the bow. Hensoldt supplied the vessel’s Nexeya combat management system as well as the surveillance radars.

To augment the vessel’s surveillance and patrol coverage, it can embark a 2.6-metre rigid inflatable boat (RIB) for at-sea interceptions and boardings and a fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). Also fitted are a launching catapult and a recovery net for use with the UAV and rescue boat davits from Vestdavit.

Royal Navy turns off oldest engine for final time

Simon Hunter

13th April 2023 at 6:00am



Minehunter HMS Brocklesby returns from Gulf to HNMB Portsmouth (Picture: Royal Navy).

After more than 40 years of service, the Royal Navy's oldest engine has run for the final time. The last Rover Salvage Generator in the fleet will be retired, with the return of HMS Brocklesby to Portsmouth after UK drills and operations, the Navy said.

The Rover was installed when Brocklesby was constructed in Southampton in 1981-82, meaning the piece of equipment is older than most of the ship's personnel. Minehunters like HMS Brocklesby can run for decades, as long as the onboard kit is kept up to date and maintained when needed.

The generator provides backup power to allow the ship's essential systems to keep running in the event of an emergency. Crews can start up the Rover to retain key functions like steering, control, radar and monitoring if other generators and electrical systems fail.

It will be replaced by a Cat C4.4 – a newer and more efficient motor, the Navy said.



HMS Brocklesby on surveying duties in Plymouth Sound earlier this year (Picture: Royal Navy).

For the past six months, crew 1 from Portsmouth's 2nd Mine Counter-Measures Squadron has looked after the 40-year-old warship. The last act for HMS Brocklesby before heading back to Portsmouth was taking part alongside Nato allies and other Navy ships on Exercise Joint Warrior.

That concluded in Campbeltown in Scotland, where the order was given to fire up the Rover one last time and set the main engines 'Pompey Revs' (full speed for home)

VESSEL REVIEW | JACQUES CHEVALLIER – LARGE-CAPACITY FLEET SUPPORT SHIP FOR FRENCH NAVY

By **Baird Maritime** - April 14, 2023



Photo: French Navy

French shipyard Chantiers de l'Atlantique has handed over the lead vessel of a new logistic support ship class ordered by the French Navy.

Named after a renowned naval engineer and nuclear propulsion specialist, the future *Jacques Chevallier* is the first in a class of four naval auxiliary vessels designated as Force Supply Ships (Batiments Ravitailleurs de Forces; BRF). These vessels will be used primarily for the transport of marine and aviation fuel, fresh water, ammunition, food, and spare parts in support of deployed naval task forces, particularly the French Navy's sole aircraft carrier strike group. The BRF's peacetime missions will include humanitarian assistance and disaster response through the provision of a modular onboard hospital, electrical power generation equipment, and equipment for supplying potable water.



Photo: French Navy

The design and construction of the four BRF ships was done with the cooperation of defence contractor the Naval Group under the supervision of the international joint armament cooperation organisation OCCAR. Chantiers de l'Atlantique is responsible for the overall design and construction of the four vessels and is responsible for the integration and assembly of the onboard systems. The Naval Group is responsible for designing, developing, and integrating the combat system as well as systems related to the handling of aircraft and the embarkation of ammunition stores.

The BRF has an LOA of 194 metres, a beam of 27.6 metres, a draught of nine metres, a displacement of 31,000 tonnes at full load, capacity for 13,000 cubic metres of fuel cargo, and accommodations for 130 crewmembers and up to 60 additional personnel. The diesel-electric propulsion system has a total installed power of 24 MW and can deliver a maximum speed of 20 knots and a range of 7,000 nautical miles – equivalent to a maximum endurance of 30 days – at a cruising speed of 16 knots. On electric motors alone, the ship can sail at 10 knots.



Refuelling-at-sea trials conducted with the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (Photo: French Navy)

As with some of the newer large supply ships of many countries' navies, the BRF is also able to refuel other vessels even while underway. This key capability was demonstrated in a series of trials carried out in late March 2023.

As an auxiliary ship, the BRF is limited to carrying only defensive armament in the form of Mistral surface-to-air missiles and Thales/Nexter 40mm autocannon.

Jacques Chevallier is scheduled to be commissioned into French service in the middle of this year. The three remaining BRFs will be delivered by 2029, by which time all four ships in the class will completely replace the French Navy's last two active 1970s-designed Durance-class replenishment oilers.



Photo: Chantiers de l'Atlantique



HMAS PERTH (III)

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