

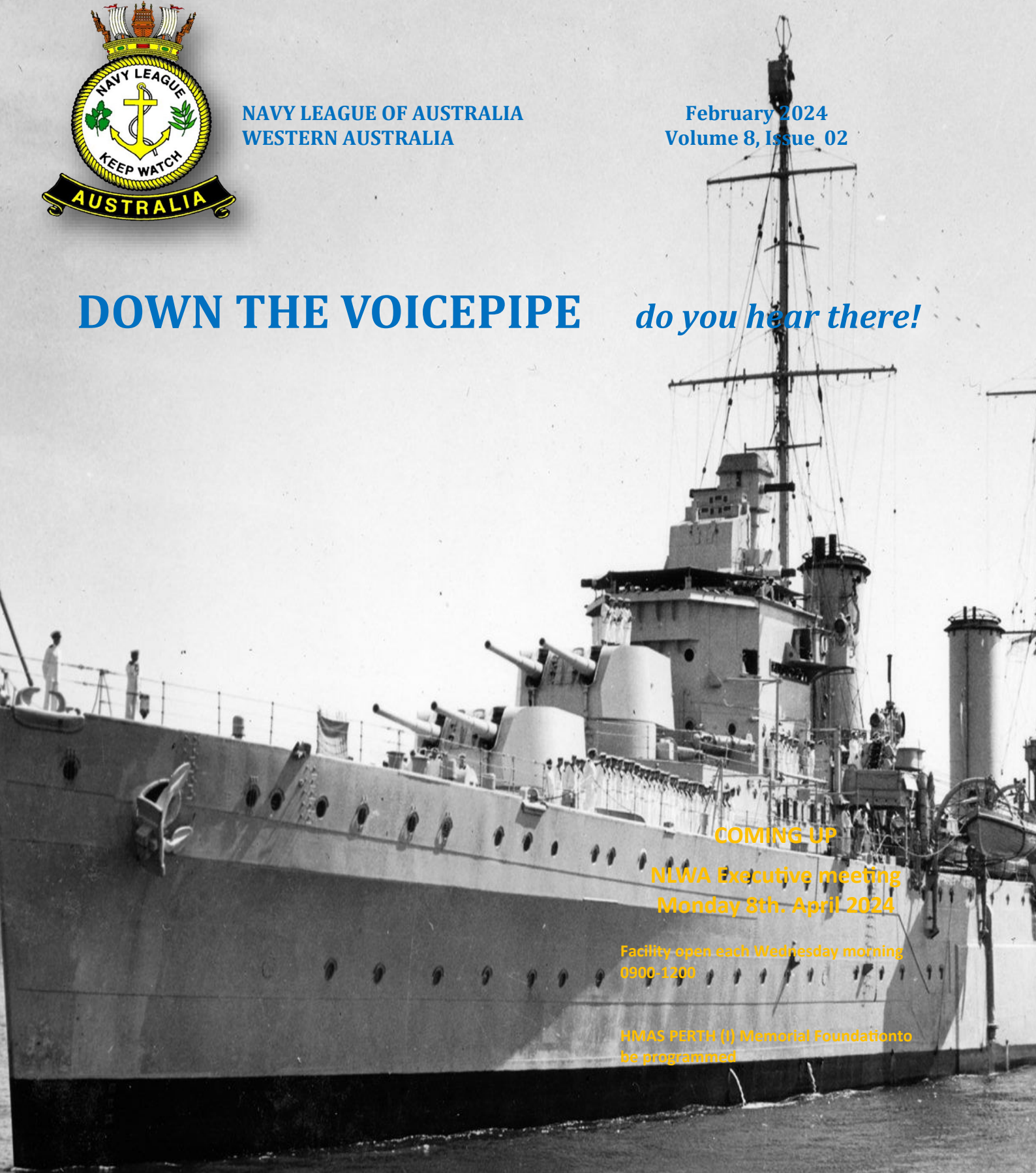


NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

February 2024
Volume 8, Issue 02

DOWN THE VOICEPIPE

do you hear there!



COMING UP

NLWA Executive meeting
Monday 8th. April 2024

Facility open each Wednesday morning
0900-1200

HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation to
be programmed

HMAS PERTH (I)
1939—1942





Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division News update



My apologies for missing the January newsletter, I was extremely busy and was never going to be able to put something together in time to allow the newsletter to come out prior to now. With some good planning and more than a little luck I'm happy to report things are back to normal again, well as close as I can hope for anyway.

Sunday the 18th saw some of us attend the 63rd HMAS PERTH Memorial Regatta at Nedlands Yacht Club and despite the excessive heatwave we have found ourselves in for the best part of the year, there was a great turnout on the day.

Numbers alone prove this event has remained at the forefront of peoples minds and we look forward to being in attendance again next year. CMDR Jorge McKee RAN Commanding Officer HMAS PERTH (III) delivered an exceptional speech, something very difficult to do when you are basically relaying the same information each year though he did it and did it well. The Sunday following the Regatta, the 25th saw us again out in force at the HMAS PERTH Memorial Church Service at St John's in Fremantle.

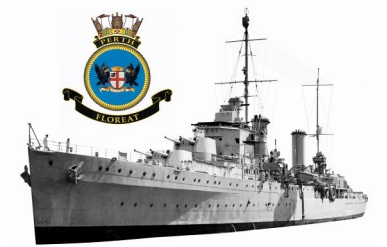
In other business, we are very much looking forward to hosting our annual Sundowner on the 17th of March. All members are encouraged to attend if able and for those who haven't been to our facility in a while it will provide a great opportunity to have a look at the ever-changing premises.

We've had a few members on the sick list of late and we wish them all the best for a speedy recovery. I'm hoping to see one or two, hopefully more at the Sundowner. I feel this will be good for them and for us in general.

Until next month

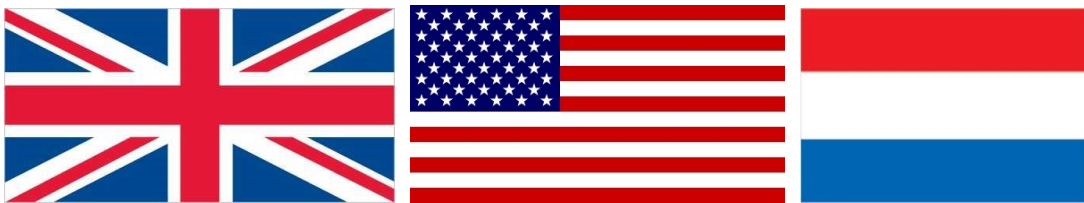
Brad





The Foundation flies the following National Flags 24/7 and flies the Naval Ensigns on special occasions. As the flags and at times the ensigns are flown 24/7 wear and tear with the elements requires the flags to be changed every six months. We are looking for individuals or associations that would like to donate or purchase new flags to replacing the flags the size we fly are 1800x900. Your support would be most welcome. Postal Address HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation Incorporated PO Box 735 Fremantle WA 6959.

NATIONAL FLAGS



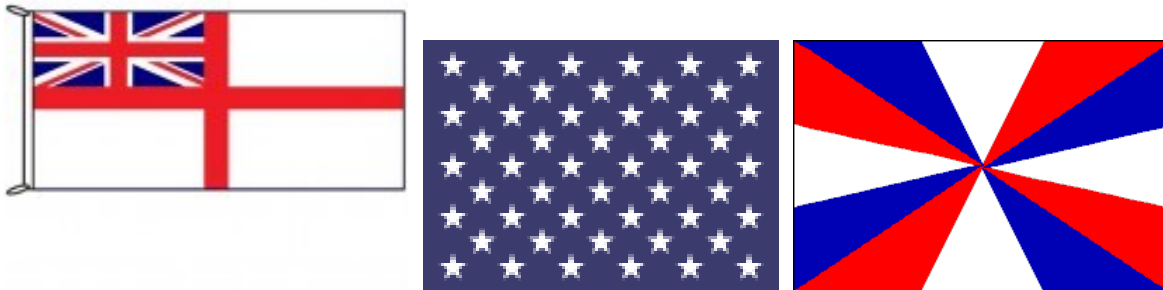
United Kingdom

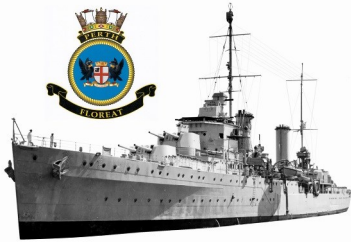
American

Dutch

NAVAL ENSIGNS

Royal Navy, United States of America, Netherlands, United States Marines, United States Navy





HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL UPDATE

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



Jim O'Neill
CMDR ANC RTD
Project Manager

LEST WE FORGET MARCH 1ST, 1942

The battle in the Sunda Strait by HMAS PERTH (I) and her gallant crew together with USS HOUSTON took place on the 1st March 1942. This year is the 82nd anniversary of the sinking. A successful day was held in late February of the Annual Hec Waller regatta see the accompanying photographs. The Annual Church service was held in St Johns Church Fremantle and after the service the wreaths were transferred to the memorial wall of the memorial in East Fremantle.

Well as we proceed with the final stage of the memorial situations change day by day. I can inform you that the glass and photos are now under construction at the glass works and should be completed in the next four weeks. The structural steel has also been delivered to BAE and the welding and construction of the frame is being attended to on site at BAE. WE are continuing to negotiate sponsorship on different portions of the memorial to bring the escalating costs back in order. This month Lysaght Industries have come on board and will be supplying the roofing materials and purlins for the roof another contactor has been engaged to complete the roof via donation of some labour costs. Presently we are seeking sponsorship from CSR for the supply of firewalls which is still unconfirmed but if sponsorship is gained will save us quite a bit of our budget. DVA have just approved another \$10000 towards the installation of the glass and we are quite confident we will be able to rake in the remaining amount of finance to complete the project this year. It has been hard going achieving our end goal however our small dedicated team are striving for a remarkable national memorial of significance dedicated to HMAS PERTH (I) and her crew . We will prevail.

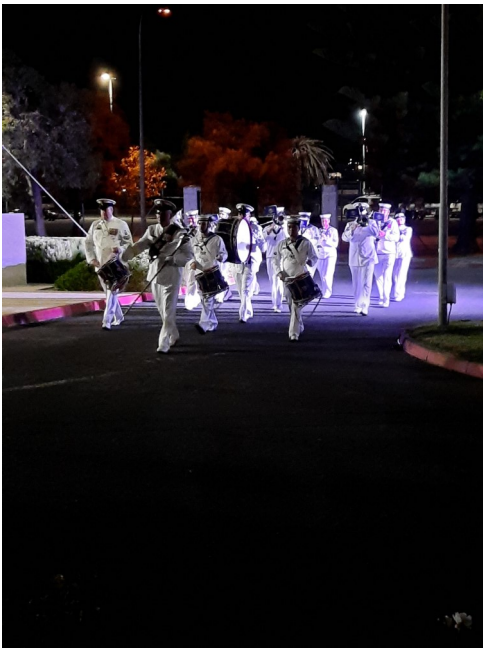


Johnnie Orr

PHOTO CAPTIONS OF THE MONTH



CMDR Jim O'Neill ANC RTD presented Life membership of Navy League of Australia to Graham Bott in company with NLWA Member and former CO of TS VANCOUVER ANC Robert Jackman.



A Fleet reception was held on Saturday 02 March 2024 to celebrate Navy Week 2024 in Leeuwin Barracks East Fremantle and was hosted by Captain Ken Burleigh RAN Commanding Officer of HMAS STIRLING. The evening was well attended and included members of the Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division and HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation.



The Annual Hec Waller Regatta was held at the Nedlands Yacht Club.

The speeches were presented by CMDR Jorge McKee RAN Commanding Officer of HMAS PERTH (III) and Mike Bailey President of the HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation INC.

Right hand photo some of the crew of HMAS PERTH (III)



SANDHAYAK – FIRST IN NEW HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY SHIP CLASS FOR INDIAN NAVY

By **Baird Maritime** - February 6, 2024.



Photo: Indian Ministry of Defence

Indian state-owned shipbuilder Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) recently handed over the lead ship of a new class of large hydrographic survey vessels ordered from the company by the Indian Navy. INS *Sandhayak* is the first vessel in the Sandhayak-class, which were designed jointly by GRSE and the Indian Navy's own Warship Design Bureau with greater capabilities compared to a similarly named class of locally built hydrographic survey ships operated by the navy since 1981. Also, because of their greater dimensions, the newer Sandhayak-class ships are the largest survey vessels ever built in India.

As with their predecessors, the newer Sandhayak-class ships' primary roles include deep-water surveys of ports, coastal areas and navigational channels and collection of oceanographic and geophysical data in support of the activities of the Indian Ministry of Defence and civil agencies. The vessels will also be equipped to perform marine research and search and rescue (SAR) and to operate as a hospital ship during wartime and in the event of disasters.

Sandhayak has a length of 110 metres, a beam of 16 metres, a displacement of 3,300 tonnes, and space for 231 crewmembers as well as unmanned craft such as autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) and remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). In addition to the unmanned vehicles, multibeam echosounders and a data acquisition and processing system are fitted for survey work. Other sensors include a GPS and a side-scan sonar.

Two diesel engines enable *Sandhayak* to reach a maximum speed of 18 knots and sail 6,500 nautical miles at a cruising speed of 16 knots. The extended endurance will permit operations up to India's extended continental shelf and the maritime limits of the country's exclusive economic zone.

Although designed for non-combat roles, the survey vessel is fitted with a CRN-91 30mm naval gun for self-defence. An aft flight deck and a hangar can meanwhile accommodate a light utility helicopter. *Sandhayak* was built with greater than 80 per cent indigenous content in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" campaign that incentivises local manufacture. Sister vessels INS *Nirdeshak*, INS *Ikshak*, and INS *Sanshodhak* are in various stages of construction at the Kattupalli shipyard of GRSE sub-contractor Larsen and Toubro.

New Scottish-named mine-hunting mothership arrives at HMNB Clyde

Alex Candlin

12th February 2024



Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Stirling Castle has arrived at her new home in Clyde, Scotland (Picture: RFA Stirling Castle)

The RFA's first Scottish-named mine-hunting 'mother ship' RFA Stirling Castle, which can launch autonomous drones to seek out threats in the water, has arrived at her new home in Clyde.

The former oil rig support ship will be captained by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Richard Reville who has spoken with pride about his new vessel. "Being on the first [Scottish-named ship](#) is an absolute pleasure. I'm very proud to be the commanding officer of such a wonderful platform with the capability that it has," he said.

He said: "I have a soft spot obviously because, for myself, I'm not very far from Stirling Castle. "There's been equipment fits on board that had to be done in order for the vessel to move into its military service. "So, it's been a long process, it's been challenging but it's been rewarding. It's been very different for us."

Mr Reville recently rejoined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) after a career that included captaining super yachts. The new minehunter RFA Stirling Castle, which was purchased by the Ministry of Defence in 2023, will replace the aging fleet of Sandown-class mine-hunting ships and is now part of the Royal Navy's "paradigm shift". The shift will change how the Royal Navy deals with the threat of sea mines around the world and the vessel could be ready for operations later this year.

Currently, her crew is going through an intense period of trials to prepare the 6,000-tonne ship for "initial operational capability". Overall, the crew will number 54, but only 27 will be deployed at any one time.

Mr Reville said the crewing arrangements gave a good "work and home life balance" and would help with recruitment. It is hoped the ship will be ready this year and a dedication ceremony could take place as early as April. Lieutenant Chris Stone, of the MTXG's Zulu Squadron, said: "It's a paradigm shift for the Royal Navy, from the legacy (mine counter-measure vessels) that Scottish people will definitely have seen about on the Clyde.

"We're bringing in a brand new remote and autonomous capability. "You only have to threaten to lay a mine in an area and that raises insurance premiums for shipping. "We need a credible capability to deal with that in the future and that's what we're working towards now." As a former commercial ship, the comfort of the accommodation on RFA Stirling Castle is higher than on Royal Navy warships. Previously a Norwegian vessel, it has an onboard sauna and two gyms.

Austal launches US Navy's Vanguard unmanned surface vessel

January 23, 2024, by Naida Hakirevic Prevljak

The U.S. Navy's newest Overlord unmanned surface vessel Vanguard (OUSV3) was recently launched from Austal USA's shipyard in Mobile, Alabama.



US Navy
Vanguard is the first USV for the US Navy purpose-built for autonomous operations from the keel-up.

Vanguard is being jointly developed by a team led by Austal USA and L3Harris. Once outfitting and testing are completed, Vanguard will autonomously transit to San Diego, joining sister ships, OUSV2 Ranger and OUSV4 Mariner, as part of the Navy's USV Division 1.

[USVDIV 1](#) is the Surface Navy organization responsible for the experimentation and tactical development of USVs. The unit also operates two additional USVs, Sea Hunter and Seahawk, which were developed separately from the Overlord program.

"We are excited to see the progress the L3Harris and Austal teams are making on the construction of Vanguard," said Capt. **Scott Searles**, program manager of the Unmanned Maritime Systems (PMS 406) program office. *"Designed and built as a USV from the beginning, Vanguard will bring new, built-in capabilities that our previous OUSVs did not possess."*

The Overlord program is managed by the US Navy's Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) and executed by PMS 406. The Overlord program has played a critical role in jumpstarting the navy's experimentation with USVs and accelerating Fleet knowledge and experience in using USVs in operations.

The knowledge gained from Overlord plays an important role in the development and refining of requirements for [the Navy's future Large USV program](#).

Türkiye welcomes first national frigate, three more naval platforms join navy's fleet

January 22, 2024, by Fatima Bahtić

STM Savunma Teknolojileri Mühendislik ve Ticaret A.Ş. under the leadership of the Defence Industry Agency (SSB) of the Republic of Türkiye, has delivered the country's first national frigate, TCG İSTANBUL.



STM

A ceremony was held on January 19 to mark the delivery of four new naval platforms that will further strengthen the Turkish Naval Forces. The ceremony was held at Sefine Shipyard in Yalova.

The new naval platforms include TCG İSTANBUL (F-515), Türkiye's first national frigate, and Logistics Support Ship TCG ÜTGM. ARİF EKMEKÇİ (A-575), as well as Replenishment at Sea and Combat Support Ship (DIMDEG) TCG DERYA (A-1590), the second largest ship in the Turkish Naval fleet, and the MARLIN Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV).



STM

The contract for the construction of the TCG İSTANBUL (F-515) – the first ship in the MiLGEM İ-Class frigate project under Phase 2 of the MiLGEM ADA-class corvette project – was signed on April 12, 2019 between STM and the Defence Industry Agency (SSB).

Following the launch of TCG İSTANBUL (F-515) on January 23, 2021, the ship rigging in a dry dock and port acceptance tests were subsequently launched in May 2022. After the completion of the port acceptance tests, TCG İSTANBUL was put to sea for the first time for Sea Acceptance Tests after a flag hoisting ceremony held on June 20, 2023.

As the first Turkish frigate designed by Turkish engineers, the structure of TCG İSTANBUL (F-515), as well as that of the other İstif-Class frigates earmarked for construction, will differ from the ADA-class corvettes in their ability to carry and launch homing surface-to-air missiles. The frigate has been developed for anti-submarine and surface warfare roles, anti-air warfare and reconnaissance, surveillance, target detection, identification, recognition and early warning missions. The ship measures 113 meters in length with a beam of 14.4 meters.



STM

According to STM, TCG İSTANBUL was constructed at Istanbul Naval Shipyard and has been integrated with advanced national solutions, including the ATMACA Anti-Ship Missile and MİDLAS Vertical Launch System (VLS) developed by Roketsan; the Gökdeniz Close-In Air Weapon System and Cenk-S AESA Radar developed by ASELSAN; and the ADVENT Combat Management System developed by HAVELSAN. Works on the construction of the sixth, seventh and eighth MİLGEM I Class Platforms, which will be sister ships to TCG İSTANBUL, were launched in partnership with STM and TAİS in 2023. A ceremony was held for the first sheet metal cutting of the national frigates (TCG İZMİR, TCG İÇEL and TCG İZMİT) on April 10, 2023 with the participation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The intention is to complete the construction of the three frigates within 36 months and to deliver them to the Turkish Navy., STM revealed.

Özgür Güleriyüz, General Manager of STM, stated that STM undertakes significant duties in the construction of national surface and submarine ships for the Turkish Navy, and has contributed to the Turkish economy through its exports of naval platforms to Pakistan and Ukraine. He said that STM was proud to have been selected as the main contractor in the TCG İSTANBUL project, as Türkiye's first national frigate.

"TCG İSTANBUL, MİLGEM İstif-Class Frigates have taken their place among the five most advanced frigates in the world thanks to their design and technologies ... Our national frigate will serve as an important deterrent for our country in the world's seas thanks to its national electronic warfare systems, which have a high localisation rate, its new generation national combat management system and its ability to launch air-guided projectiles," he noted.

In January this year, Defence Industry Executive Committee (SSİK) decided to extend the MİLGEM project with the construction of four further İ-Class Frigates (numbered 9–12), increasing the number of İ-Class frigates to be built in the program to eight.

Turkish Navy welcomes LSS TCG ÜTGM. ARİF EKMEKÇİ

A contract was signed between the SSB and STM on February 9, 2021 for the delivery of two Logistics Support Ships to Turkish Naval Forces Command. As the main contractor in the project, STM was assigned responsibility for all program management, procurement, assembly, ship outfitting, integration, testing and ILS activities.

TCG YZB. GÜNGÖR DURMUŞ (A-574), the first ship in the Logistics Support Ship Project, was constructed in ADA Shipyard, and was delivered to Turkish Naval Forces Command at a ceremony held on December 8, 2021. TCG ÜTGM. ARİF EKMEKÇİ (A-575), the second ship in the project, took to the seas for the first time to begin its Ship Acceptance Tests after a flag hoisting ceremony held on July 5, 2023 and entered the service following a ceremony held on January 19, 2024.



STM

The ship measures 106.51 meters in length and has a beam of 16.80 meters. It is operated by an 82-person crew, and features an aft floating system and fleet replenishment capabilities. Furthermore, the vessel can sail at speeds of 12+ knots and has a cruising range of 9,500 nautical miles. It is equipped with two 12.7 mm ASELSAN STAMP weapon systems and a helipad that can accommodate a 15-ton utility helicopter. Its logistics capabilities are supported by a crane with a lifting capacity of 18 tonnes, and it can carry eight containers, 631 tons of drinking water, 336 tons of JP-5 helicopter fuel and 4,036 tonnes of F-76 fuel, according to STM

US Marine Corps taps Birdon to develop heavy landing craft – H260

January 19, 2024, by Fatima Bahtić

The US Marine Corps has selected Birdon’s heavy landing craft – H260 design to be part of a test and evaluation exercise focused on its missions.



Birdon

The H-260, a long-range, shallow draft, independent vessel, shares a common lineage with Birdon’s proposed heavy landing craft for the Australian Army LMV-H.

It embodies Birdon’s extensive knowledge of the Indo-Pacific’s demanding area of operations, both sea states and landing conditions, and Birdon’s understanding of the US Marine Corps and Australian Defence Force littoral warfare concepts.

Looking outwardly similar to many oil and gas offshore support vessels, but with integrated signature reduction features, the 260-foot-long craft features a payload of 440 short tons, deck space of 8,000 square feet, the ability to accommodate 72 Marines and 26 crew.

It has a range of over 5,000 nautical miles, and a draft of only 6.5 feet allowing it to access a far larger proportion of beach and riverine offload locations than similar-sized vessels. The H-260 can adapt to a wide range of mission profiles and sustain multiple deployments.

The aft loading and forward enclosed ramps enable rapid load transfer while adding flexibility to cope with a wider range of landing sites. Its forward wheelhouse and accommodation are distanced from the noise and vibration of the propulsion systems, and combined with the proprietary bow, reduces pitching moment and accelerations on embarked personnel, all of whom have bunks, delivering an enhanced habitability.

The crews and commanders have extensive visibility for all operational activities.



‘Cut me some slack’

‘Cut me some slack’ is an expression that has been used for many years, and was an instruction given when a ship was docking.

Tying a ship to a pier was always a difficult task and required two teams of men equipped with mooring ropes.

To ‘cut me some slack’ meant to loosen the rope. As one rope was pulled to haul the ship closer, the other line was released or given slack, which would continue until the ship was properly aligned and docked.

Nowadays, it means to make allowances for a person’s behaviour, or to be less strict with someone.



Teething troubles: The problems faced by the crews of the Royal Navy's two carriers

4th March 2024 at 3:40pm



The carriers can accommodate F-35B Lightning jets as well as helicopters such as the Merlin and Wildcat (Picture: Royal Navy)

HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales are the largest and most powerful ships ever built for the Royal Navy. The project to build the two aircraft carriers cost the UK more than £6bn.

HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales have each taken on numerous deployments since their commissioning into the Royal Navy in 2017 and [2019](#) respectively.

But neither vessel has been without problems, which have forced them to undergo repair work or even pull out of multinational exercises. Both ships have had to step in for one another on exercise.

Here are a few of the notable incidents.

[HMS Queen Elizabeth's departure from Portsmouth for repairs delayed by weather](#)

[HMS Queen Elizabeth's departure for large Nato exercise cancelled after propeller shaft 'issue'](#)

[Navy chief hails 'monumental' effort to get HMS Prince of Wales to sea](#)

HMS Queen Elizabeth

February 2024

The Royal Navy's fleet flagship was due to lead Exercise Steadfast Defender – the largest Nato exercise since the Cold War – but this was [cancelled at the last minute](#) after a problem with her starboard propeller shaft coupling was spotted during final checks.

HMS Prince of Wales [was deployed](#) to take the place of the £3bn warship on the major exercise. A Ministry of Defence spokesman said the issue on HMS Queen Elizabeth was separate and not linked to an earlier defect on her sister ship.

HMS Prince of Wales

August 2022

HMS Prince of Wales [broke down](#) as she was heading out for joint exercises with the US Navy, the Royal Canadian Navy and the US Marine Corps.

The carrier came to a halt off the Isle of Wight and was [brought back under tow](#) into Portsmouth harbour for the problem to be identified. Inspections by divers and engineers found the 33-tonne starboard propeller – the same weight as 30 Ford Fiesta cars – had malfunctioned, with a coupling holding it in place breaking.

HMS Prince of Wales was taken to the Babcock shipyard where she was built in Rosyth to [undergo repairs](#) to the propeller shaft, which took nine months to complete.

On that occasion, HMS Queen Elizabeth acted as the replacement for her sister ship on the US deployment.

February 2023

A second, [separate shaft](#) on board HMS Prince of Wales was found to have similar issues to those which caused the aircraft carrier to retreat for repairs the previous August. The Defence Select Committee heard the ship's port shaft was also found to have encountered difficulties, following checks regarding the initial error.

October 2020

An investigation was launched after personnel had to remove water from a compartment of the ship due to a leak that had been caused by an "internal system" issue.

May 2020

Earlier that year, another investigation was carried out after a leaking pipe caused an ankle-high flood on board the carrier.

VESSEL REVIEW | IMPHAL – NEW STEALTH DESTROYER FOR INDIAN NAVY

By **Baird Maritime** - March 8, 2024.



Photo Indian Ministry of Defence

The Indian Navy has commissioned a new guided-missile destroyer into service. Named after the capital city of the state of Manipur, *INS Imphal* is the third ship to be built under the Project P-15B series of stealth destroyers, otherwise known as the Visakhapatnam-class. All four ships in the class were built at the Mumbai facilities of state-owned Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL) to a design by the Indian Navy's own Warship Design Bureau. Missions include anti-air warfare (AAW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), and anti-submarine warfare (ASW).

The Visakhapatnam-class ships were developed to be modified variants of the Indian Navy's Kolkata-class stealth guided-missile destroyers. The alterations were aimed at minimising costs and development time while retaining the general dimensions, displacement, and combat capability of the Kolkatas. Notable changes include an updated bridge layout to reduce radar signature and the placement of the main sonar equipment at the bow instead of further along the hull bottom.

Like its sisters, *Imphal* has a length of 163 metres, a beam of 17.4 metres, a draught of 6.5 metres, a displacement of 7,400 tonnes, and a crew complement of 50 officers and 250 enlisted personnel. Two Bergen 7,400kW diesel engines and two Zorya M36E gas turbines in a combined gas and gas (COGAG) configuration allow the ship to reach speeds of just over 33.5 knots and sail up to 8,000 nautical miles at a cruising speed of 18 knots. This capability also translates into a maximum operating endurance of 45 days, making extended-duration patrols possible.



Photo: Indian Navy

The armament consists of 16 Brahmos anti-ship cruise missiles, 32 Barak 8ER surface-to-air missiles housed in vertical launch cells, an OTO Melara (now Leonardo) 76mm naval gun, twin 533mm torpedo launchers, anti-submarine rocket launchers, and four AK-630M 30mm close-in weapon systems for point defence against hostile missiles and airborne threats. Also fitted are two 12.7mm heavy machine guns on two OFT stabilised remote controlled mounts.

The aviation facilities include a flight deck and a hangar capable of accommodating up to two examples of either the HAL Dhruv utility helicopter or the Westland Sea King ASW helicopter. There is also onboard space for four rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) for at-sea interceptions and boardings. To provide additional protection from hostile missile attacks, the destroyer is fitted with two Kavach decoy launchers.

The electronics suite includes an Israel Aerospace Industries EL/M-2248 MF-STAR active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar capable of tracking airborne and surface targets up to 280 nautical miles away, a Thales LW-08 D-band surveillance and target acquisition radar that can also track aircraft and cruise missiles, a BEL HUMSA-NG sonar with both active and passive detection modes, a BEL Nagin active towed array sonar, and a DRDL Shakthi electronic warfare system to identify and jam hostile radars and guidance systems. Electrical power for the onboard systems is supplied by four generators driving Cummins KTA50G3 engines and a Kirloskar AC generator.

A total atmosphere control system (TACS) helps protect the crew in the event of nuclear fallout. The ship's air filters are also designed to continue supplying breathable air even after the onboard spaces have been exposed to nuclear, biological, and chemical contamination. To further improve survivability, MDL fitted the destroyer with multiple fire zones, distributional power systems, and battle damage control systems.



REPUBLIC OF FIJI NAVY ACQUIRES NEW PATROL BOAT

By **Baird Maritime** - March 11, 2024.



Photo: Republic of Fiji Navy

The Republic of Fiji Navy recently took delivery of a new Guardian-class patrol boat built by Austal Australia.

RFNS *Puamau* was acquired by the Australian government on behalf of the government of Fiji. It is the second Guardian-class boat to be handed over to the Republic of Fiji Navy under the Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Project.

The vessel has a steel hull, a length of 39.5 metres, and an integrated stern launch and recovery system for use by a rigid inflatable boat. Missions will include maritime law enforcement, border patrol, and search and rescue.

Construction of UK's first Type 31 frigate presses ahead

February 29, 2024, by Fatima Bahtić

HMS Venturer's impressive bow unit was recently installed as progress on the ship's structure continues, according to shipbuilding major Babcock International.



A graphic of HMS Venturer launching a Sea Ceptor missile to defend HMS Queen Elizabeth; Royal Navy According to the company's [social media post](#), the construction of the Royal Navy's first Type 31 frigate HMS Venturer has moved forward as the bow was installed inside Venturer Building at Rosyth.

Leading the way, this part of the ship has complex geometry because of the curvature of the plate.

"The efficient design of the Type 31 bow plays a crucial role in optimising the ship's fuel efficiency, speed and overall performance. With its distinct shape, it will cut through the water and reduce drag for smooth navigation," according to Babcock.

Royal Navy has recently announced that HMS Venturer is affiliated with the Essex county. Civic leaders have agreed to be affiliated with the Type 31 frigate – currently under construction in Scotland – linking the warship with more than 1.8m people in East Anglia from Chigwell to Colchester, Braintree to Basildon.

"It is wonderful that HMS Venturer is affiliated with the County of Essex," said Commander **Chris Cozens**, the frigate's Senior Naval Officer.

"The rich naval and maritime history combined with its modern outlook is a fitting choice for a 'Next Generation Frigate'. We both share a focus on community outreach, linking the sea to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths and industry to benefit our national prosperity."

The Type 31 frigates (Inspiration-class) will replace five general-purpose Type 23 frigates that have served the navy since the early 1990s. The Royal Navy has picked Babcock's Arrowhead 140 proposal as the preferred design for its Type 31 frigates. HMS Venturer will be floated off in the first half of 2024.

Kim Beasley is a Senior fellow at ASPI. He served as Australia's Defence Minister from 1994 to 1990 and as ambassador to the US from 2010 to 2016. Image Department of Defence.



Australia's disappeared surface combatant fleet

19 Jan 2024 | [Kim Beasley \(https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/author/kim-beasley/\)](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/author/kim-beasley/)



As Australia awarded itself an ill-thought-out peace dividend at the end of the Cold War, the impact fell hardest on the Navy's surface combatant fleet. Arguably no element was thought through more thoroughly for the [1987 defence white paper](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust/1987) than the fleet. Having decided not to acquire an aircraft carrier, the surface combatants were recognised as central to our maritime defence.

The white paper called for a force of three guided missile destroyers (DDGs) and six guided missile frigates (FFGs). With them, though still to be selected, were eight Anzac class frigates which entered service between 1994 and 2005.

That made a force of 17 surface combatants.

This was not an ad hoc decision. It was a calculation of the force needed to work in the various points of entry through the archipelago to Australia's north. Studies suggested we needed 20 ships but there was not the money. It was hoped New Zealand would acquire four frigates and that might fill the gap. Critically, as the white paper mentioned repeatedly, the whole force structure was not Cold War related. It was about the character of our region in the medium term. The paper argued that we should relieve the US of the burden of interposing its own forces in the defence of our approaches. Our maritime defence was central to that self-reliance.

Of the 17 vessels planned for those chokepoints, the subsequent 30 years saw the three DDGs and then the six FFGs retired. The Navy's three [Hobart class](https://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/ddg) air warfare destroyers (AWDs) were to replace the three DDGs. Instead, the three AWDs replace the six FFGs as well, nine ships in all. If we built six more AWDs, experience and

efficiencies would make them relatively cheap, and our force would look quite formidable. Some could be optimised for anti-submarine warfare which would mean that the current defence minister, who bears no responsibility for any of this, would not be faced with his most troubling decision, the future of the Hunter Class frigate (<https://www.australiandefence.com.au/defence/sea/anao-report-critical-of-navy-s-frigate-program>) program.

The previous government ended our 30-year Gulf and Red Sea commitment, removing the challenges of maintaining and crewing the Anzacs on their long patrol. During the Iraq war, HMAS Anzac became the first RAN ship to fire its gun in anger since Vietnam as it supported the British landing on the Al Faw Peninsula.

The Australian has reported that consideration is being given to withdrawing HMAS Anzac and two of its sisters from the order of battle. This would reduce costs and help relieve chronic crew shortages for the remainder of the fleet. Instead of 17 ships, we would have eight. In the current effort to keep the maritime highway through the Red Sea open in the face of attacks by Houthi missiles and drones any of these ships could be deployed but the mission is more difficult than the previous tasks. The Anzacs could protect themselves but would find it difficult to protect others. The Navy's three AWDs, able to integrate seamlessly with US systems, would be as effective as any other of its type there. The government has made clear that its decision to commit support personnel rather than a ship is based on its consideration of what must now be our priorities.

This clearly does not trouble the US in any major way as it was pleased to announce Australia as part of the coalition force.

What has gone wrong over 30 years? Clearly reduction of financial resources stands at the top. It suggests that commitment to self-reliance was skin deep. We took a post Cold War peace dividend like all our allies. In our case it was not justified, at least against the 1987 strategic underpinning of our defence.

The world in the early 1990s looked full of hope. China was viewed in benign terms with great expectations of a constructive contribution to the global economy. Defence planners are supposed to be bleak, but we missed the most important strategic development of the 1990s. That was the agreement between China and the Soviet Union, and then Russia, to delimit their boundary conflict that in 1969 saw a battle between them on the Ussuri River in which 30,000 died. It has been claimed that President Nixon was asked by the USSR if the US would mind it using nuclear weapons. The US did mind. That agreement shifted the Chinese focus on land and nuclear forces from its northeast to its southwest. China could now emerge as a serious maritime power.

A further factor which moved our focus on the surface fleet was the emergence of the Middle East in a way that took us away from our emphasis on defending the country and our approaches. Paradoxically for us, that was preceded by the major role Australia played in Timor's independence. That strategic expeditionary task for our ground forces and the Navy saw attention focus on acquiring large amphibious ships.

The Middle East created situations engaging all our armed services, both logistic and combat elements including Afghanistan and two wars in Iraq, one which saw Saddam Hussein overthrown, the other the struggle against ISIS. More broadly, counter terror after the 9/11 atrocities in the US, underpinned the priority the struggle was given.

Though these engagements were expensive, they were easily doable with a budget in the region of 1.5 to 1.8% of GDP which was nothing like the cost of nine surface combatants. Psychologically the highly praised activity of our serving personnel left a sense that we had what we needed and with a highly satisfied main ally.

An odd interlude in this was a decision to move away from equipping the Anzacs with a helicopter that had no ASW capability, the Sea Sprite. This was the product of an aborted effort to jointly build an offshore patrol vessel with Malaysia. The vessel could not carry the much more capable Seahawk Romeo. I remember a former chief of naval staff, the now late Admiral Michael Hudson ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Hudson_\(admiral\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Hudson_(admiral))), being furious as we continued to pursue the Sea Sprite. The whole point of the Anzacs was anti-submarine warfare in our approaches. Had we forgotten why we acquired them? That was rectified by the cancellation of the Sea Sprite and the introduction of the Romeos in 2008.

The Red Sea struggle has demonstrated that future wars might well require more capable warships to protect sea lanes from land-based threats. The USN is now focusing greater attention on numbers. Small, heavily armed ships and unmanned surface and underwater systems are being rapidly developed and we are interested.

The problem is, though defence spending is rising, the priorities are many. We have immediate problems. All the armed forces have expensive items on the table and severe personnel issues. We can't afford any mistakes and we must not be trapped by the long term. We are acquiring the future capital ship—nuclear powered attack submarines—but that is long term. Our ally is filling our gaps in the short term. We can't afford a long-term solution in our surface fleet as well. Hopefully, as the government addresses our surface fleet needs, it will have that in mind.

Probe launched after fire breaks out on board HMS Queen Elizabeth on way to Rosyth

10th March 2024 at 9:40am



The aircraft carrier is currently travelling to Rosyth for repair work to her propeller shaft coupling. A probe has been launched into a fire that broke out on board HMS Queen Elizabeth while the Royal Navy flagship was making a stop on her way to Rosyth dockyard for repairs.

A spokesperson said the "small, isolated" fire had been quickly brought under control and extinguished while the ship was in Glenmallen.

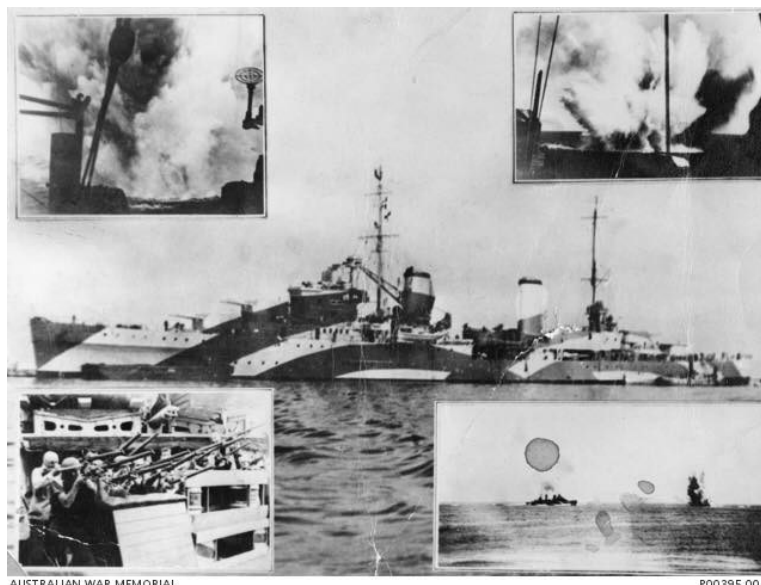
The Navy is now working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to establish what caused the blaze. There were no reported injuries as a result of the incident and no ordnance was involved. The aircraft carrier is currently [travelling to Rosyth for repairs](#) to her propeller shaft coupling.

HMS Queen Elizabeth had been due to lead the largest Nato exercise since the Cold War, but [had to withdraw](#) at the last minute after an issue with one of her propeller shafts was spotted during final checks.

[HMS Prince of Wales was sent](#) on Nato's Exercise Steadfast Defender instead.

This setback comes 18 months after Queen Elizabeth's sister ship broke down off the Isle of Wight after she set sail for the US, having suffered a malfunction with a coupling on her starboard propeller.

On that occasion, [HMS Queen Elizabeth stepped in](#) for HMS Prince of Wales, heading to the US deployment instead.



Defence of Australia: An isolationist fantasy, old and tired dream we struggle to wake from

28 FEBRUARY 2024

By: Stephen Kuper



HMAS Brisbane sails through a big swell in the Philippine Sea during ANNUALEX 2023 (Source: Dept of Defence)

For much of our modern history, Australia’s strategic posture has been based on what has been formalised as “Defence of Australia” doctrine and a relatively peaceful slumber abrogating the heavy lifting to others. Now, waking from the slumber is of paramount importance.

If you ask many Australians, the “Defence of Australia” is the paramount responsibility of the Australian government, as a concept, however, it’s a little more convoluted.

Equally, if you ask many Australians, defending mainland Australia is a no brainer, as is defending Australia’s economic interests in both the Indo-Pacific and more broadly, on the global stage.

Where we start to run aground is just where the Venn diagram of defending mainland Australia and our regional and global economic interests overlap – particularly against the backdrop of an increasingly multipolar and divided world characterised by competition between great and emerging powers.

For former prime minister [Paul Keating](#) and strategic policy experts like [Hugh White](#), and seemingly still, Australia’s defence apparatus, the “Defence of Australia” seemingly begins and ends with our exclusive economic zone (EEZ), beyond which we largely abrogate responsibility for the security of our interests to “great and powerful friends”.

Now yes, the [2023 Defence Strategic Review](#) (DSR) called for a shift in our defence posture, shifting the focus from defending the continent from invasion towards a “strategy of denial”, led by long-range fires and our future fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to “control” and “deter” hostilities toward critical maritime corridors through Southeast Asia, mainly the Straits of Malacca, Lombok, and Sunda, respectively.

This is expanded upon in the Defence Strategic Review, which stated, “The Indo-Pacific is the most important geostrategic region in the world ... For military planning, in terms of our strategic geography, the primary area of military interest for Australia’s national defence is the immediate region encompassing the north-eastern Indian Ocean through maritime Southeast Asia into the Pacific. This region includes our northern approaches.”

Beyond this defined area, Australia effectively defers to the benevolence and will of “our great and powerful friends” and the enduring benevolence of potential adversaries with broad ambitions for the post-Second World War order, something that continues to come apart at the seams.

Back to the future

For historian [Alex McDermott](#) and former foreign minister [Alexander Downer](#), both writing for *The Australian Financial Review*, waking from our “long holiday from history” and naive slumber is now of paramount importance.

Beginning with McDermott to set the scene, he stated, “Keating’s proposals for how to protect the nation are a throwback to the 1930s isolationism that Labor’s wartime leader championed. Were Keating still running the show, our alliance with the United States would be downgraded and the AUKUS nuclear submarine program scrapped, with Australia instead being defended by doubling the number of Collins Class conventional submarines...”

Going further, McDermott added, “When Curtin took over the Labor Party in 1935, the civilised world was menaced by totalitarian regimes from all sides, and lurching rapidly towards the abyss. The ALP remained the same electoral basket case it had mostly been since its opposition to sending [Australian conscripts](#) to fight in Europe during World War I destroyed its credibility on national defence.

“He [Curtin] developed a defence policy that advocated a system of home defence as narrowly defined as it was possible to imagine: an air force and some submarines strictly confined to protecting the coastline. Beyond the continental shelf was other people’s business,” McDermott explained.

Adding further colour to the image is former foreign minister Alexander Downer, who said, “The present Labor government has also put aside two absurd features of the Keating era: a defence policy designed solely to deal with direct invasion of Australia and the diminution of Australia’s traditional alliances, particularly with the United States.”

Now I will disagree in part with the comments of Downer, particularly his statement around the DSR putting aside plans to defend Australia from direct invasion, which to be fair, it does.

However, even in its broadest conceptualisation, the policy and posture championed under the Albanese government’s Defence Strategic Review fails to shift the nation’s capability development and strategic doctrine beyond “dominating” the “sea-air gap” championed in the 1987 Defence white paper, titled, [The Defence of Australia](#).

Indeed, this is reinforced by the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Richard Marles, who detailed this continuation of the “Defence of Australia” posture, albeit giving it shiny new names like “Impactful Projection”, which he [explained](#) as, “I think, increasingly we’re going to need to think about our Defence force in terms of being able to provide the country with impactful projection, impactful projection, meaning an ability to hold an adversary at risk, much further from our shores, across kind of the full spectrum of proportionate response. Now, that is actually a different mindset to what we’ve probably had before.”

But none of this really moves the dial.

Hiding behind a ‘great and powerful friend’ v ‘serious and lethal capabilities’

This “novel” approach presented by the government and defended by former prime minister Keating builds on the approach taken by the Curtin government during the Second World War, as explained by McDermott who stated, “to the end Curtin remained strategically insular, verging on myopic, unwilling to grasp the global strategy demands that the US and UK were grappling with to win a world war.

“His preference was to crouch all Australian forces behind an American security umbrella, and refuse or avoid genuine engagement in the real battle theatres – eerily reminiscent of Albanese’s recent refusal to send tangible support to the [Red Sea](#), which the government has tried to justify by saying we have to look after our own neighbourhood instead,” McDermott added.

Dower expanded on this criticism, stating, “While Keating has always had a clear understanding of power within Australia, he’s never seemed to grasp international power politics. His, and Labor’s, traditional approach to defence strategy is the defence of Australia. Of course but what they fail to understand is that Australia’s security will only be threatened if regional order and security breaks down.”

Yet Australia continues to hide behind our “great and powerful friend/s” and the doctrine of “impactful projection” that advocates lobbing missiles and other ordnance over the horizon, regional presence deployments and our future nuclear-powered submarine fleet with little in the way of actual doctrine and real capability to shape our environment and defend our interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Downer added colour to this, saying, “In this region, we need to be making a significant contribution to the regional power balance and the alliance. That means having serious and lethal defence capabilities. Just having a navy which might stop incursions into Australian territory is not enough. We need to have a defence force which can not only deter attacks on Australia but can also operate effectively throughout our region, and occasionally where necessary beyond.”

Developing these “serious and lethal defence capabilities” is now of paramount importance and doing so in a way that doesn’t leave one branch lopsided; sorry to burst the bubbles of the “Focused Force” fans.

In light of this, it is becoming clear that Australia is going to require a “Balanced Force”, not a “Focused Force”, as championed by the Defence Strategic Review, and this “Balanced Force” will need to deliver capabilities we traditionally depend on “our great and powerful friend/s” for. If only we had a model for doing this?

cough Forward Defence *cough*.

Final thoughts

Importantly, in this era of renewed competition between autarchy and democracy, this is a conversation that needs to be had in the open with the Australian people, as ultimately, they will be called upon to help implement it, to consent to the direction, and to defend it should diplomacy fail.

Our economic resilience, capacity, and competitiveness will prove equally as critical to the success in the new world power paradigm as that of the United States, the United Kingdom, or Europe, and we need to begin to recognise the opportunities presented before us.

Articulating this to the Australian public, bringing them on the journey, and helping them to understand that Australia's interests, particularly our economic interests extend far beyond our myopic view of the Indo-Pacific and are indeed global in scope.

That isn't to advocate for the creation of a global Australian military, but rather calls for an acceptance by policymakers and the Australian public that we need to be directly responsible and invested in our interests and defend them accordingly.

This will also require an expansion of Australia's economic resilience, and as a result, deterrence to economic coercion, this should be the core focus of the government because only when our economy is strong can we ensure that we can deter aggression towards the nation or our interests.

Australia will need to have an honest conversation about how we view ourselves and what our own ambitions are. Is it reasonable for Australia to position itself as a "middle" or "regional" power in this rapidly evolving geopolitical environment? Equally, if we are going to brand ourselves as such, shouldn't we aim for the top tier to ensure we get the best deal for ourselves and our future generations?

If we are going to emerge as a prosperous, secure, and free nation in the new era of great power competition, it is clear we will need break the shackles of short-termism and begin to think far more long term, to the benefit of current and future generations of Australians.

Get involved with the discussion and let us know your thoughts on Australia's future role and position in the Indo-Pacific region and what you would like to see from Australia's political leaders in terms of partisan and bipartisan agenda setting in the comments section below, or get in touch at Stephen.kuper@momentummedia.com.au or at editor@defenceconnect.com.au.



With the surface fleet review locked in, what about the rest of the Navy fleet?

27 FEBRUARY 2024

By: Stephen Kuper



Our Navy is more than just our destroyers, frigates and OPVs, yet the recent surface fleet review has left some serious questions about the rest of the Navy's surface fleet.

As the largest island continent on the planet with a maritime jurisdiction of in excess of 8 million square kilometres, Australia, as a nation and a people, is defined by its relationship with the ocean.

Beyond the social and cultural aspects, our relationship with the ocean and our maritime approaches has ranged from angst to anxiety through to hostility and outright apathy as a result of our "tyranny of distance".

This "tyranny of distance" is rapidly being replaced by a "predicament of proximity" given the nation's geographic location at the crossroads of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the economic, political, ideological, and strategic competition of the 21st century.

This has only become more front of mind since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and the Red Sea, which is responsible for constraining waterways responsible for US\$1 trillion (AU\$1.51 trillion) worth of maritime trade every year, never mind China's ongoing brinkmanship and antagonism in the South China Sea putting at risk more than US\$5 trillion (AU\$7.57 trillion) of maritime trade every year.

In recognition of these mounting challenges, the Albanese government's [*Independent Analysis into Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet*](#), colloquially known as the "Surface Fleet Review" has heralded a once-in-a-generation transformation of the Royal Australian Navy's surface combatant fleet.

This detailed analysis and its findings, spearheaded by US Navy Vice Admiral (Ret'd) William Hilarides is designed to deliver, as the Defence Strategic Review summarised, "an enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, that complements a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet, is now essential given our changed strategic circumstances".

As part of this, we now know that the surface combatant fleet will grow from the current fleet of 11 to 26, with some minor tinkering around the edges of the fleet (because let's be honest, that is all it is), by far the largest decision of which is a fleet of between seven and 11 general purpose frigates.

Many of the capabilities like our fleet auxiliary oilers serve as the connective tissue enabling the Navy to maintain operations abroad, while our amphibious warfare ships provide important tactical and strategic mobility for the Army, or the Navy's ageing fleet of minehunters that ensure the safety of deployed warships in hostile waters.

Yet as with any navy, the surface fleet is more than our destroyers, frigates and offshore patrol vessels, yet the review into our surface fleet has been very light on the details about the future of many major capabilities essential for sustained naval operations throughout the Indo-Pacific. So what gives?

Amphibious warfare, sealift and afloat support

With the growth of the Navy now seemingly locked in, there remains significant questions about the rest of the fleet.

While it is clear we are still a long way from seeing a return to fixed-wing naval aviation from Australia's Canberra Class amphibious warfare ships, what are the upgrade plans for these large vessels? Will they be getting more potent self-defence capabilities like the SeaRAM variant of the Rolling Airframe Missile system?

Equally, what is the planned replacement strategy for these vessels even though they are only a decade old, given Australia's tendency to drag out procurement programs, it seems prudent we begin now, right?

Moving to the other arm of Australia's amphibious warfare/sealift capability, the HMAS *Choules* is scheduled to be replaced by two sealift ships in the 16,000-tonne range under the \$3-4 billion [SEA 2200 program](#) first announced in 2020 as part of the [Defence Strategic Update](#) (DSU) and supporting [Force Structure Plan](#) (FSP).

Where are our plans for this replacement capability? Or will this be absorbed under LAND 8710 Phases 1 and 2 or the Littoral Manoeuvre Vessels of both the "Medium" and "Heavy" category? Because it isn't clear that those proposals would be able to meet the intent established in the 2020 FSP, namely: "Design, development and acquisition of two Australian-built multi-role sealift and replenishment vessels to replace HMAS *Choules*. This will greatly extend Navy's ability to project and sustain the joint force."

When it comes to at-sea replenishment capacity, Australia's two Supply Class tankers are now finding their sea legs (no pun intended) despite some teething issues, yet for an island continent that has committed to doubling its surface combatant fleet, two tankers seem hardly capable of supporting sustained naval operations.

Now yes, some have suggested that Australia would be able to call on New Zealand's tanker, the HMNZS *Aotearoa* if needs be, but that is a band-aid solution at a time when Australia's Navy will require greater capacity to conduct concurrent operations across the Indo-Pacific.

All of this combines to leave significant questions that are yet to be answered, with even the [2023 Defence Strategic Review](#) being light on the details, where the DSR stated, "LAND 8710 Phases 1-2 – Army Littoral Manoeuvre Vessels (Landing Craft Medium and Heavy) should be accelerated and expanded."

While we may get further details in the upcoming biennial National Defence Strategy planned for release later this year, this doesn't exactly engender any sense of confidence in the current approach.

Minehunting, hydrographic survey and salvage support

Our amphibious sealift and at-sea support capabilities aren't the only question mark about the future of the Navy's surface fleet, with Australia's ageing Huon Class minehunter fleet and Leeuwin hydrographic survey ships, the two major classes that were earmarked for replacement in the 2020 DSU and FSP, respectively.

The 2020 FSP articulated this plan, stating that both the Huon and Leeuwin Class would be subject to, "Enhancements to mine countermeasures and hydrographic capabilities through the acquisition of up to eight additional vessels, built in Australia – potentially based on the Arafura Class offshore patrol vessel design."

Additionally, this would be supported by the acquisition of advanced sea mines to protect Australia's critical maritime sealines of communication and northern approaches, while also leveraging the development of advanced uncrewed underwater systems and sensors to de-risk counter mine operations for the human operators.

Building on this, the 2020 FSP articulated the acquisition and/or development of advanced undersea systems, where the "Government will also invest in an integrated undersea surveillance system (including exploration of optionally crewed and/or uncrewed surface systems and uncrewed undersea systems), an undersea signature management range, and expanded undersea warfare facilities and infrastructure" to operate in conjunction with and compliment to the growing surface fleet.

Finally, the 2020 FSP also called for the acquisition of a "support and salvage vessel to enable the recovery and at-sea repair of large warships" which also goes unaccounted for in the government's surface fleet review.

Photo # NH 53582 USS Houston off San Diego, Calif., in Oct. 1935, with President Roosevelt on board



The people and money questions

Now all of this comes at a cost and a significant one at that, yet we have only seen a marginal increase in the funding allocated by the government over the forward estimates and out at the end of the decade, with an additional \$1.7 billion allocated in the forward estimates period.

This funding will be supported by an additional \$11.1 billion of extra funding over the next decade, but that is only to account for the surface fleet expansion announced in the government's independent review, none of the other capabilities and platforms mentioned above.

So it is becoming clear that Australia's much-celebrated surface fleet review only goes a fraction of the way to confronting the maritime security challenges facing the nation and requires more considered planning in terms of appropriately financing the significant expansion of naval capability.

Equally, we know that the Navy faces mounting crewing challenges across the fleet, which will only be further compounded by the necessary expansion of the connecting tissues that are our sealift, amphibious warfare, auxiliary warfare and at-sea replenishment capabilities that will ensure the fleet can fight and win at sea.

Final thoughts

While it is fair and justified to state that the government's [Independent Analysis into Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet](#) emphasised the "major fleet units" that would be at the frontline of naval combat in our region, the Navy's combatant fleet is significantly larger than what was focused upon.

The rapidly deteriorating geopolitical and strategic environment that is transforming the global and regional security paradigm requires a realistic analysis, assessment and acceptance by Australia's policymakers.

Equally, both the Australian government and the Australian public have to accept and understand that we will need to dramatically increase spending in our national defence and do so over the long term, rather than short-term sugar hits or sleight of hand that push money out over the forward estimates and allow inflation to account for "increases" in spending, despite there being little-to-no new money in real terms.

Ultimately, this comes back to the government's shift away from a "Balanced Force" towards a "Focused Force" as championed in the Defence Strategic Review and the foundational problem that is our lack of clearly defined role and objectives for our own defence capabilities.

Importantly, no one has said that defending the nation in this era of renewed and increasingly capable great power competition will be cheap or easy and we have to accept that uncomfortable reality, because the alternative outcome is infinitely worse.

Get involved with the discussion and let us know your thoughts on Australia's future role and position in the Indo-Pacific region and what you would like to see from Australia's political leaders in terms of partisan and bipartisan agenda setting in the comments section below, or get in touch at Stephen.kuper@momentummedia.com.au or at editor@defenceconnect.com.au.



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