

***Naval Station Everett:
“The Sailor’s Choice” Poised for the Future***

U.S. Representative Rick Larsen



Naval Station Everett

Source: cnic.navy.mil

Naval Station Everett (NSE) is located on natural deep water at the city of Everett, just 25 miles north of Seattle, Washington. Conceived as an aircraft carrier homeport, NSE has served as one of the country's premier naval bases and is the most modern base since 1994 in the US Navy.

Background

Naval Station Everett served as the homeport for aircraft carriers USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72) from 1997-2011 and USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) from 2012-2015.

In 2015, the Navy affected a temporary homeport shift for USS NIMITZ, moving the carrier to Bremerton to prepare the ship for a planned maintenance period. The Navy assured the greater Everett community USS NIMITZ would be returning in Fiscal Year (FY) 19. However, the Strategic Laydown and Dispersal (SLD) plan for FY 20-FY 24 keeps USS NIMITZ at Bremerton and does not include a replacement carrier at Naval Station Everett.

According to Navy leadership, the reason for removing the carrier missions is the lack of nearby carrier maintenance capability. The Navy claims temporarily moving crews or ships is expensive, inefficient and a burden on sailors' quality of life. Significant evidence contradicts these claims, and these justifications fail to account for NSE's advantages.

This year, Vigor Marine LLC was awarded a contract for long-term repair work on two cruisers, the USS Chosin (CG 65) and USS Cape St. George (CG 71). While the cruisers will be located in Seattle, the crew and families will be homeported in Everett. I look forward to welcoming both ships, their crews and families to the Second District.

The following five elements further illustrate how NSE's location, natural characteristics, modern infrastructure and new shipyard make it an ideal location for future Navy and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) homeporting.

1. As a natural deep-water port, NSE is a unique and vital asset for the U.S. Navy.

Unlike other carrier homeports, NSE has no tidal restrictions, bridges or other obstructions between port and the open ocean and does not require dredging to maintain depth.

When removing the carrier mission from NS Everett, the Navy failed to account for the value of dispersing the fleet, did not include deployability in its analysis, and under-resourced a new and efficient installation. The Navy is making a bad decision.

The FY 20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision directing the Comptroller General to submit a report to the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) on recent changes to the Navy's West Coast aircraft carrier homeporting. The provision states HASC is concerned the Navy made its decision to not return USS NIMITZ to NSE without fully considering operational impacts, installation capacity, or state and local plans that could mitigate impacts to the maintenance of, and personnel assigned to the ship.

Everett is a supportive community, with a high standard of living, access to high-quality education, great jobs for military spouses and committed local partners. The last time the Navy studied the impact of conducting carrier availabilities at Bremerton for an Everett-based carrier, the analysis showed no detriment to sailor quality of life. Naval Station Everett is truly "the Sailor's Choice."

2. The Navy will need every available pier in order to reach its 355-ship goal by 2049.

On December 15, 2016, the Navy released a force-structure goal calling for 355 ships, the largest force-level goal the Navy has released since the 375-ship force-level goal in 2002-2004 (see below). In order to reach its 355-ship goal, the Navy will need to maximize its use of pier space.

Table I. 355-Ship Force-Level Goal

Ship Category	Number of ships
Ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)	12
Attack submarines (SSNs)	66
Aircraft carriers (CVNs)	12
Large surface combatants (i.e., cruisers [CGs] and destroyers [DDGs])	104
Small surface combatants (i.e., frigates [FFGs], Littoral Combat Ships, and mine warfare ships)	52
Amphibious ships	38
Combat Logistics Force (CLF) ships (i.e., at-sea resupply ships)	32
Command and support ships	39
TOTAL	355

Source: U.S. Navy, Report to Congress on the Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for Fiscal Year 2020, Table A-1 on page 10.

As the Navy prepares an updated Force Structure Assessment (FSA), it is important to note the administration's National Defense Strategy placed an emphasis on renewed great power competition with China and Russia. NSE is a key national security asset in the Pacific with underutilized capacity.

3. NSE has hosted Navy frigates in the past and has the capability to do so in the future

Navy and Marine Corps officials have suggested the next FSA could fundamentally change the fleet's architecture, reducing the proportion of large surface combatants and increasing the proportion of small surface combatants, such as frigates and Littoral Combat Ships (LCS).

In its FY 20-24 shipbuilding plan (below), the Navy estimated building nine FFG(X) frigates. The Navy wants to begin procuring the new FFG(X)s in FY 20, with plans to award the contract for the detail design and construction of its first FFG(X) in July 2020.

Table 2. FY2020 Five-Year (FY2020-FY2024) Shipbuilding Plan

FY2019 shown for reference

	FY19 (enacted)	FY20 (req.)	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY20- FY24 Total
Columbia (SSBN-826) class ballistic missile submarine			1		1	2	
Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) class aircraft carrier		1				1	
Virginia (SSN-774) class attack submarine	2	3	2	2	2	2	11
Arleigh Burke (DDG-51) class destroyer	3	3	2	2	3	3	13
Littoral Combat Ship (LCS)	3						0
FFG(X) frigate		1	2	2	2	2	9
LHA amphibious assault ship						1	1
LPD-17 Fight II amphibious ship			1		1		2
Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) ship	1				1		1
Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) ship	1						0
John Lewis (TAO-205) class oiler	2	2	1	1	2	1	7
TATS towing, salvage, and rescue ship	1	2	1	1	1		5
TAGOS(X) ocean surveillance ship				1	1	1	3
TOTAL	13	12	10	9	13	11	55

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on FY2020 Navy budget submission.

Notes: Ships shown are battle force ships—ships that count against 355-ship goal. The figures in the table reflect a Navy decision to show the aircraft carrier CVN-81 as a ship to be procured in FY2020 rather than a ship that was procured in FY2019. Congress, as part of its action on the Navy's proposed FY2019 budget, authorized the procurement of CVN-81 in FY2019.

Before the Navy decommissioned frigates in 2015, NSE was historically used a frigate homeport. As the Navy develops its new class of frigates, it should remember NSE's history as a frigate homeport when deciding where to homeport future ships.

4. NSE is in the center of Pacific Northwest's transportation network

The nearby Port of Everett is a critical hub in the regional transportation network, supporting Washington state's thriving aerospace, manufacturing and energy sectors, which employ more than 35,000 Washingtonians. The Port is just minutes away from major interstates and ferry routes across Puget Sound, and is in the middle of the North Puget Sound Manufacturing Corridor, the largest concentration of manufacturing facilities and jobs in the state, employing over 65,000 people in high-tech manufacturing.

In 2017, shipyard operations ceased when Vigor Marine stopped its operation at the Port. Since then, the Port of Everett has worked to find another shipbuilder in order to create a new shipyard at the waterfront. In October 2019, the Port of Everett authorized a \$33 million agreement to buy an adjacent former pulp mill as part of a plan to clean up a stretch of industrial shoreline for redevelopment. Last month, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the Port of Everett will receive \$15.5 million in federal funding to make necessary improvements to 58 acres of land on Everett's waterfront. This Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant will help prepare the area for future maritime freight transportation. The Port has also leased the space south of the former pulp mill property to Everett Ship Repair, LLC.



Source: <https://www.heraldnet.com/business/port-of-everett-secures-mill-property-eyes-shipyard-lease/>

The new shipyard would be capable of working on military and commercial ships.

NSE is considered the “Sailor’s Choice” in part due to the support the sailors and Coast Guardsmen receive from the local community and the modern on-base facilities to provide services and child care. The addition of a new shipyard just steps away from NSE make it even more attractive as a homeporting location for the Navy and USCG.

5. NSE’s location and ease of access make it an ideal location for USCG Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) Homeporting

The construction of the first USCG OPC began in January 2019. OPCs will provide a capability bridge between the open ocean national security cutter and the near shore fast response cutter. OPCs will also be used for drug interdiction operations. USCG plans to acquire 25 OPCs and will need homeports for these ships. Due to its strategic location and ease of access to Alaska and maritime borders with Canada and Mexico, NSE would be an ideal homeport for OPCs.

On November 19, my office received a letter from Coast Guard Rear Adm. Michael Ryan, which said the USCG plans to homeport two OPCs in the Pacific Northwest, with the first of these ships being delivered in 2025. NSE is being considered as a homeport for these OPCs because, according to the USCG, its

selection would maximize the use of existing federal facilities to help reduce costs, achieve efficiencies and leverage military personnel support activities.

The women and men of the Coast Guard play a critical role in securing the nation's maritime borders, saving lives at sea and ensuring the efficiency of domestic maritime commerce. The Port's many strategic advantages make it evident the Coast Guard would benefit from the city's waterfront assets and opportunities if they were to homeport OPCs at the Port.

Conclusion

For its modern facilities, welcoming community and high quality of life, NSE has rightly earned a reputation as the "Sailor's Choice." By emphasizing the installation's inherent strategic attributes and collaborating with local leaders to enhance community support, I will work to attract Navy and USCG assets and missions and prepare NSE for the future.