



March 27, 2026

HII's Weekly News Digest is compiled every Friday by the Corporate Communications team to summarize and highlight news stories of significance to the company.

Industrial Base Support Discussed On Capitol Hill: Inside Defense reported on Thursday that Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition members gathered on Capitol Hill this week to persuade lawmakers to allocate funding for the aircraft carrier industrial base in fiscal year 2027. More than 70% of the coalition's 2,000 members have cited inconsistent funding and delayed purchase orders as the top barriers to reaching full capacity. Notably, less than 10% of coalition members are operating at full capacity, according to a recent ACIBC survey. ACIBC Chair Lisa Papini said Congress must approve and distribute further funding for *William J. Clinton* (CVN 82) to better fuel the supply base. To date, the Navy has awarded first-year advance procurement funding for CVN 82. Meanwhile, Inside Defense reported on Wednesday that lawmakers, industry officials and experts convened that day at the inaugural hearing for the National Commission on the Future of the Navy to discuss, in part, the state of the industrial base. During a panel discussion, Kari Wilkinson, president of HII's Newport News Shipbuilding division, said predictable contract awards are essential. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Ala., chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, agreed. "We have got to make it simpler to construct ships, and a lot of that is moving with urgency and cutting out the red tape and all the approvals," he said during one of the commission's hearings.

HII To Open ROMULUS USV Production Hub: The Defense Post reported on Thursday that HII will establish a new assembly center in Louisiana to support the manufacture of its ROMULUS unmanned surface vessel family. The New Iberia facility is being created in partnership with Breaux Brothers Enterprises and will utilize High-Yield Production Robotics (HYPR), which integrates automated welding and material handling as well as digital quality systems into manufacturing activities. HII's announcement comes as the Navy sunsets the Modular Attack Surface Craft program in favor of a new family of medium unmanned surface vessels (MUSVs). A request for proposals for the USV family was published Thursday, seeking companies with mature, production-ready platforms to participate in on-water testing within fiscal year 2026 and deliver initial production vessels in fiscal year 2027. Responses to the request are due April 17. Inside Defense reported Thursday that Rebecca Gassler, who leads the Navy's Robotic and Autonomous Systems program office, said the new MUSVs will have multiple use cases consistent with Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle's hedge strategy and the Trump administration's Golden Fleet concept. The program is funded by the budget reconciliation package, which pumped \$2.1 billion into MUSV initiatives. The vessels are intended to host modular payloads that can be swapped on and off to accommodate a variety of missions, putting the effort in alignment with the Navy's "containerized payload capability plan."

Eric Chewning Discusses Evolution Of AI And Shipbuilding: War on the Rocks published an interview with Eric Chewning, the executive vice president of maritime systems and corporate strategy at HII, on Wednesday. During the interview, Chewning offered a behind-the-scenes look at how innovation, partnerships, artificial intelligence, robotics, and workforce investment are reshaping the U.S. Navy's shipbuilding industrial base. He also explained how American naval shipbuilding is rapidly transforming and how HII is helping lead that charge. "It all comes down to demonstrating value and getting pull from

within the organization. As these early wins compound, we're building a culture where shipbuilders see AI as a tool that amplifies their expertise rather than replaces it," Chewning said.

Social Media Highlight Of The Week

Posted Friday, March 20, on Mission Technologies' LinkedIn page:

"John Bell, chief technology officer at HII Mission Technologies, joined a panel Wednesday at the Homeland Security Symposium & Expo at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia.

Speaking on "Overcoming Institutional Barriers to Technology Adoption," Bell emphasized that successful technology transition hinges on three elements: people, mission-aligned solutions, and clear transition pathways. He highlighted the importance of converting skeptics, building integrated teams with strong senior leadership support, designing solutions with prototypes and sustainment in mind, and leveraging digital engineering and open standards.

"People are the number one factor you've got to consider when you're talking about transitioning innovations," he said. "Build an insurgent team—technologists, visionaries, champions, allies, proxies—free to move quickly and be a little bit of a rebel."

HII was proud to sponsor the Homeland Security Symposium & Expo, supporting collaboration across government, academia, and industry to accelerate innovation and strengthen national security."



HII Apprentice Schools Graduate Nearly 200 Students: 13NewsNow reported on Saturday that The Apprentice School at NNS held a commencement ceremony with 128 graduates that morning in Hampton, Virginia. U.S. Education Secretary Linda McMahon delivered the keynote address, highlighting the importance of skilled workers in building and sustaining the nation. WTKR reported on Friday, March 20, that McMahon also participated in a roundtable discussion with shipbuilders focused on workforce development and national security. Meanwhile, WLOX reported earlier this month that Ingalls Shipbuilding celebrated the 70 graduates from its apprentice school program during a ceremony held March 16. The Ingalls class completed the Department of Labor-registered program, which combines classroom instruction, paid on-the-job training, and industry-recognized credentials.

Navy Expands Low-Cost Weapons, Modular Capabilities For Fleet Flexibility: Inside Defense reported on Tuesday that the U.S. Navy is rapidly equipping destroyers with low-cost counter drone systems, including Coyote and Longbow Hellfire munitions, as part of a broader shift toward scalable, affordable defenses against unmanned threats. Four destroyers in the *Gerald R. Ford* Carrier Strike Group are already outfitted with containerized munitions. Four additional destroyers in the *Roosevelt* Carrier Strike Group are receiving similar systems, and the Navy is planning follow-on installations on vessels within the *Eisenhower*, *Vinson* and *Reagan* Carrier Strike Groups, the spokesperson said. Defense Scoop reported on Friday that the Navy is also advancing a new "containerized capability campaign plan" to enable ships to carry modular payloads such as weapons, drones and sensors that can be quickly adapted for different missions without major overhauls. The strategy supports a broader modernization push toward a more flexible, hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned platforms.

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