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## **Navy investigates weld inspection falsification issue on Virginia class submarines and aircraft carriers**

Washington, DC. -- The Navy announced today that it is working with its industry partners to ensure the readiness of aircraft carriers and submarines after being notified that a Northrop Grumman shipyard worker falsified non-nuclear weld inspections. On May 15, 2009, Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding – Newport News (NGSB-NN) informed the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) that they had identified a NGSB-NN inspector who had signed off on three weld joint inspections that he had not actually performed. The inspector was responsible for conducting either Magnetic Particle or Liquid Penetrant non-destructive testing inspections on non-nuclear structural or piping welds for Virginia class submarines and aircraft carriers.

“We build these ships to very exacting standards,” said Rear Adm. Thomas Eccles, Chief Engineer and Deputy Commander for Naval Systems Engineering, Naval Sea Systems Command. “The quality of our welds is created by our people and the welding process. The weld inspections are a validation of that high-quality work.”

NAVSEA conducted an engineering assessment of USS George HW Bush (CVN 77) and determined that the ship was safe for conducting flight deck certification which completed May 27, 2009. Based on the assessment of the number of weld inspections performed by this inspector on aircraft carriers, the Navy is confident that there is minimal impact to aircraft carriers.

NGSB-NN has commenced inspections of welds on affected Virginia Class submarines. Affected submarines, except USS New Hampshire (SSN 778) and USS Toledo (SSN 769), are in construction or maintenance availabilities at either NGSB-NN or General Dynamic – Electric Boat (GD-EB). With respect to USS New Hampshire and Toledo, NAVSEA evaluated the welds at issue and determined that none represented a threat to the safety of the crew or ships. The submarines will remain at sea New Hampshire will be inspected during her Post Shakedown Availability which is scheduled for February 2010. The welds in question on Toledo were technically reviewed and deemed acceptable with no further action required.

NAVSEA is working in full cooperation with NGSB-NN and GS-EB to identify a re-inspection plan for affected welds.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) began an investigation May 20 into the weld inspection falsifications.

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