



UNITED STATES 7TH FLEET PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIT 25104 CODE 012
FPO AP 96601-6003
www.c7f.navy.mil

Commercial: 808-653-2152 [From U.S.]
Commercial: 046-816-7220 [From Japan]
DSN: 315-243-7220 [While in port Yokosuka, Japan]
DSN: 315-453-2152 [While underway]
E-mail: webmaster@c7f.navy.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2013

Navy Commander Expresses Regret Concerning USS Guardian Grounding

From U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

YOKOSUKA, Japan – The U.S. 7th Fleet Commander on Saturday expressed regret over the grounding of USS Guardian (MCM 5) on Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea.

“As a protector of the sea and a Sailor myself, I greatly regret any damage this incident has caused to the Tubbataha Reef,” said Vice Adm. Scott Swift. “We know the significance of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and its importance as a World Heritage Site. Its protection is vital, and we take seriously our obligations to protect and preserve the maritime environment.”

Swift also announced that Rear Adm. Thomas Carney, Commander of Logistics Group Western Pacific, will take over on Jan. 21 as the on-scene commander to oversee the Guardian recovery operations. Carney will embark the destroyer USS Mustin (DDG 89), which along with several other U.S. Navy support vessels, is focused on preventing any further environmental damage to the reef and surrounding marine environment.

As of Jan. 20 the condition of the Guardian has not changed; the ship is still grounded with no one onboard and there are no traces of an oil slick in the area.

No one was injured during the Jan. 17 grounding, and due to a concern for personnel safety caused by hazardous weather conditions and poor sea states, essential Navy crewmembers have not yet returned to survey Guardian. Once the survey is complete, recovery efforts will commence.

When the Guardian is safely recovered by the U.S. Navy, the U.S. government will continue to work with the Republic of Philippines government to assess the extent of the

damage to the reef and the surrounding marine environment caused by the grounding. The Republic of the Philippines government was promptly informed of the incident and is being updated regularly by U.S. officials.

Prior to leaving a port visit in Subic Bay, Guardian canceled a scheduled fuel stop to Puerto Princesa. Guardian departed Olongapo City en route to Indonesia and was transiting the Sulu Sea when the grounding occurred at approximately 2:25 a.m. Thursday. Based in Sasebo, Japan, the Avenger-class mine countermeasures ship remains stuck on Tubbataha Reef's south atoll, approximately 80 miles east-southeast of Palawan Island.

The U.S. Navy is undertaking an investigation to determine the exact cause of the grounding.

-C7F-