

BAE Systems expands ship repair work to Chula Vista

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BAE Systems San Diego Ship Repair, the Barrio Logan-based shipyard that provides maintenance for military and commercial ships, recently expanded its operations to Chula Vista.

The company is moving into an 110,000-square-foot warehouse building on Industrial Boulevard. About 150 members of BAE Systems' roughly 2,100-person workforce will relocate to the new facility to perform warehousing and administrative duties.

The expansion was prompted, in part, by the planned addition of a 950-foot-long dry dock at the Barrio Logan facility. To accommodate the increased capacity that BAE's second dry dock will bring, the Chula Vista facility will be a staging and laydown area for ship components before they are transported to the waterfront.

"The move is all about optimizing our San Diego shipyard for the future work that's coming to the Port of San Diego, with an eye on supporting our Navy customer, repairing ships and being a part of the South County community," said Karl Johnson, a shipyard spokesman.

The dry dock will allow the shipyard to

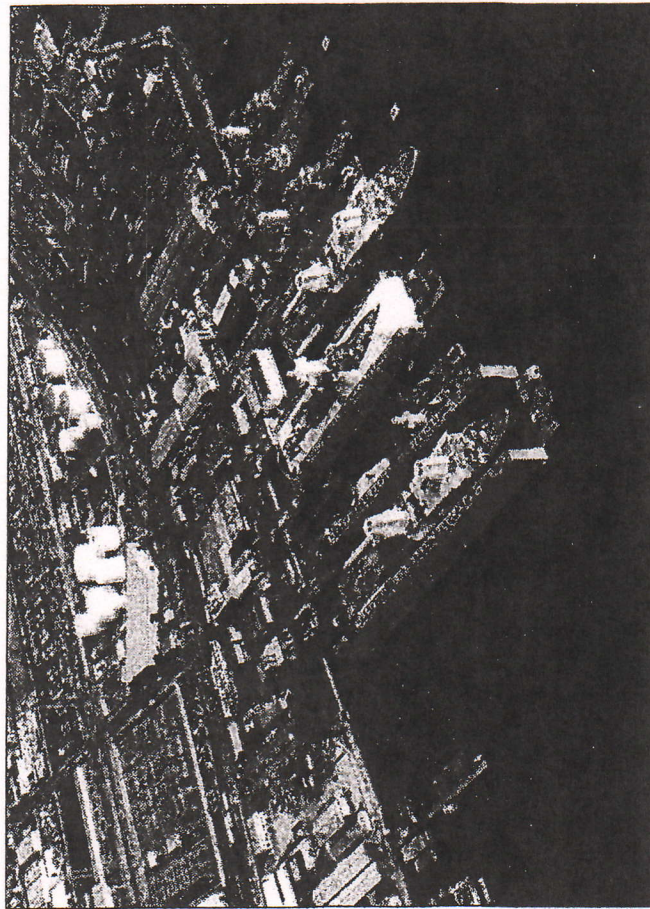


Photo courtesy of BAE

An artist's conception of what a 950-foot dry dock (left) will look like once it's installed at the BAE Systems shipyard in Barrio Logan. In anticipation of the increased workload, BAE Systems leased a 110,000-square-foot warehouse in Chula Vista.

perform extensive repairs and modernization on any of the U.S. Navy's San Diego-based warships, except for the aircraft carriers, which do not fit under the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge.

The increased capacity will help BAE accommodate the Navy's growing presence in

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San Diego. As part of the Pentagon's "Pacific pivot," much of the nation's naval fleet will be repositioned to the Asia-Pacific region, which will up the number of warships stationed in San Diego from around 60 vessels to about 70 in the next decade.

Scheduled to arrive in November, the \$103 million dry dock will be capable of lifting a 60,000-ton ship out of the water for repairs.

"In order to do a lot of the extensive repair, maintenance and modernization work on these surface combatants, you're going to need to take them out of the water," Johnson said. "You can do a lot of hull repair and propulsion repair to the ship when it's out of the water."

To lift a ship, the massive walled-platform will be flooded so the vessel can float into it. The dry dock will then be "re-floated," bringing the ship's hull out of the water, Johnson said.

The shipyard's second dry dock, with the one next door at the General Dynamics NASSCO yard, will allow three ocean-going vessels to be repaired at a time. The repair process

that can last for months.

"Adding a ship allows us to provide the critical maintenance the Navy needs while allowing sailors to stay in San Diego with their families," Johnson said. "Otherwise, the ships would have to go elsewhere to be repaired."

In anticipation of the increased workload, BAE leased the Chula Vista warehouse, which was formerly occupied by the Raytheon Company.

Chula Vista mayor Mary Casillas Salas said she had been working alongside the South County Economic Development Corp. for more than a year to bring BAE to the city.

Salas said that, although the 150 jobs that will move to the warehouse won't be new jobs, she hopes BAE, and other companies in the shipbuilding and ship repair industries, continue to expand in South County.

"Companies tend to cluster, so if this is the first foot into the door, we hope that more companies like this will be attracted to Chula Vista," Salas said. "I really see this maritime industry as a growing and emerging cluster here in Chula Vista, and I'm really happy about that."