

U.S. Shipbuilding - Requirements - Capabilities - Carriers

Mr. John Lehman,
*Vice President of Strategy, Corporate
Development and Government Relations for Abyss
Defense Industries*

Mr. John F. Lehman is Vice President of Strategy, Corporate Development and Government Relations for Abyss Defense Industries, a startup in the defense manufacturing space. In this position, he is responsible for creating and coordinating the company's strategic and business development initiatives as well as coordinating communications with the legislative and executive branches. Prior to his current position, Mr. Lehman served in same role at Fincantieri Marine Group from 2019 to 2025.

Previously, Mr. Lehman served as a Professional Staff Member for the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) from January 2015 until November 2018. Mr. Lehman's portfolio included Air Force and Naval Aviation programs and policies. Prior to the SASC, Mr. Lehman worked as an investment banker in the Aerospace and Defense group at Evercore, where he advised clients on mergers, acquisitions and corporate strategy.

From 2003 to 2011, Mr. Lehman served as a Naval Flight Officer in the United States Navy. As an EA-6B Prowler Electronic Countermeasures Officer, he deployed as a member of the VAQ-141 Shadowhawks aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt in support of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Pacific area of operations. His shore tour was on the Secretary of the Navy's staff in the White House Liaison Office.

Mr. Lehman received his B.A. in Diplomatic History from the University of Pennsylvania and M.B.A. from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth.

Steven Wills, PhD,
*Navalist, Center for Maritime Strategy, Navy
League of the United States*

Dr. Steven Wills currently serves as a navalist for the Center for Maritime Strategy at the Navy League of the United States. He is an expert in U.S. Navy strategy and policy and U.S. Navy surface warfare programs and platforms.

His research interests include the history of U.S. Navy strategy development over the Cold War and immediate, post-Cold War era, and the history of the post-World War II U.S. Navy surface fleet.

Wills had a 20-year career as an active-duty U.S. Navy officer and served on a variety of small and medium surface combatants, including an assignment as the executive officer of a mine countermeasures ship. He also held shore-based billets at the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate, NATO Joint Forces Command, Naples, Italy, and the NATO Joint Force Maritime Component Command, also in Naples. After retiring from the Navy in 2010, he completed a master's and a Ph.D. in history with a concentration on military history from Ohio University, graduating in 2017. He is the author of

"Strategy Shelved: The Collapse of Cold War Naval Strategic Planning," published by Naval Institute Press in July 2021 and, with former Navy Secretary John Lehman, "Where are the Carriers? U.S. National Strategy and the Choices Ahead," published by Foreign Policy Research Institute in August 2021. In addition, Wills' articles have appeared in the U.S. Naval War College Review, U.S. Naval Institute News, Real Clear Defense, the Center for International Maritime Security, War on the Rocks and InformationDissemination.net. In addition to his history degrees, Wills holds a master's in national security studies from the U.S. Naval War College and a bachelor's in history from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

