Coast Guard, Partners Continue Mass Rescue Operations from Maui Fires

Aug. 10, 2023

HONOLULU — The Coast Guard, federal, state, and local partners are responding to the Lahaina wildfires in Maui, HI.

The incident response includes the U.S. Coast Guard, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, Maui Department of Fire and Public Safety, Maui Police Department, Department of Land and Natural Resources, National Guard, and the Department of Defense, who continue to support and closely monitor the rescue and evacuation efforts.
“On behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the communities who have been tragically affected by the fires in Maui,” said Capt. Aja L. Kirksey, Sector Commander of Coast Guard Sector Honolulu. “Our collaboration with partner agencies and neighboring jurisdictions remains steadfast, as we unite our resources, knowledge, and equipment to ensure responder and public safety and amplify the impact of our response efforts.”

• At 5:45 p.m., Tuesday, Coast Guard Sector Honolulu watchstanders received reports regarding multiple persons in the water needing rescue after taking shelter from fire and smoke in Lahaina, Maui.

• Coast Guard Sector Honolulu watchstanders issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast Notice for a mass rescue.

• Watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak, launched an Air Station Barbers Point MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter aircrew and a 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew from Station Maui. Two U.S. Navy MH-60 aircrews from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 37 were also deployed.

• Tuesday evening, the 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew arrived on scene and rescued 14 survivors from the Lahaina Harbor Breakwall with all survivors reported to be in stable condition.

• Current response efforts include multi-agency personnel remaining on scene with air coverage from Air Station Barbers Point MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter aircrews and Navy MH-60 aircrews from the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 37.

• A 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew from Station Maui remains on scene along with the Coast Guard Cutters Kimball and Joseph Gerczak.

We urge residents to heed the safety warnings from officials and to adhere to evacuation orders and safety guidelines
issued by local authorities. Officials have issued a safety zone and temporary flight restrictions in the vicinity of the Lahaina Harbor and surrounding areas.

Contact the Maui Emergency Operations Center for emergency operations information at (808) 205-9328.

Updates will be provided via the Fourteenth Coast Guard District’s social media page: @USCGHawaiiPAC

Media requests for additional information may be directed to the District 14 Public Affairs Office at uscgd14mauifires@gmail.com.

DOD Announces Establishment of Generative AI Task Force

Release from the Department of Defense

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AUG. 10, 2023

Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced the establishment of a generative artificial intelligence (AI) task force, an initiative that reflects the DoD’s commitment to harnessing the power of artificial intelligence in a responsible and strategic manner.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Kathleen Hicks directed the organization of Task Force Lima; it will play a pivotal role in analyzing and integrating generative AI tools, such as large language models (LLMs), across the DoD.
“The establishment of Task Force Lima underlines the Department of Defense’s unwavering commitment to leading the charge in AI innovation,” Hicks said. “As we navigate the transformative power of generative AI, our focus remains steadfast on ensuring national security, minimizing risks, and responsibly integrating these technologies. The future of defense is not just about adopting cutting-edge technologies, but doing so with foresight, responsibility, and a deep understanding of the broader implications for our nation.”

Led by the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO), Task Force Lima will assess, synchronize, and employ generative AI capabilities across the DoD, ensuring the Department remains at the forefront of cutting-edge technologies while safeguarding national security.

“The DoD has an imperative to responsibly pursue the adoption of generative AI models while identifying proper protective measures and mitigating national security risks that may result from issues such as poorly managed training data,” said Dr. Craig Martell, the DoD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer. “We must also consider the extent to which our adversaries will employ this technology and seek to disrupt our own use of AI-based solutions.”

Leveraging partnerships across the Department, Intelligence Community and other government agencies, the task force will help minimize risk and redundancy while pursuing generative AI initiatives across the Department.

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a transformative technology with the potential to revolutionize various sectors, including defense. By leveraging generative AI models, which can use vast datasets to train algorithms and generate products efficiently, the Department aims to enhance its operations in areas such as warfighting, business affairs, health, readiness, and policy.
“The adoption of artificial intelligence in defense is not solely about innovative technology but also about enhancing national security,” said U.S. Navy Capt. M. Xavier Lugo, Task Force Lima mission commander and member of the CDAO’s Algorithmic Warfare Directorate. “The DoD recognizes the potential of generative AI to significantly improve intelligence, operational planning, and administrative and business processes. However, responsible implementation is key to managing associated risks effectively.”

The CDAO became operational in June 2022 and is dedicated to integrating and optimizing artificial intelligence capabilities across the DoD. The office is responsible for accelerating the DoD’s adoption of data, analytics, and AI, enabling the Department’s digital infrastructure and policy adoption to deliver scalable AI-driven solutions for enterprise and joint use cases, safeguarding the nation against current and emerging threats.

For more information about Task Force Lima, please visit the CDAO website at ai.mil. You can also connect with the CDAO on LinkedIn (@ DoD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office) and Twitter (@dodcdao). Additional updates and news can be found on the CDAO Unit Page on DVIDS.

Department of the Navy Two-Year Review

Release from the Secretary of the Navy

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Statement from Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro:

Today marks my second anniversary as your Secretary of the Navy, and it continues to be an honor to serve by your side. In that time, our Navy and Marine Corps team has made much progress advancing our three enduring priorities: Strengthening Maritime Dominance, Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence, and Enhancing Strategic Partnerships. Together, we are improving readiness and modernization in order to ensure we can always fulfill our mission to be combat-ready; our future depends on the work we do today to create a more ready, modern, and capable Navy and Marine Corps team.

Visiting you at naval bases, shipyards, depots, training ranges, tarmacs, and runways world-wide, I have witnessed firsthand the progress you have made towards improving the training, readiness, and modernization of our fleet and force. Along with your senior leaders throughout the Department, I strive to ensure you have the resources you need today and well into the future. Thanks to your collective efforts, we have worked effectively with Congress via the President’s Budget Requests for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022-24 to increase the Department of the Navy’s top line budget by more than $47 billion, a 23% increase from FY 2021. There is still much work to be done, and this increased investment in our fleet and force by the American people is a sacred trust that reflects the centrality of the Navy and Marine Corps to our national security strategy in this era of competition.

Read the full memo [HERE](#).
Machinist Pipeline Program Creates Good-Paying Career Pathways

Release from SENEDIA

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Five Graduate from Pilot Partnership Between SENEDIA and Nashua Community College

MIDDLETOWN, RI – The New England Submarine Shipbuilding Partnership, powered by SENEDIA, announced today the completion of a pilot Machinist Pipeline Program run in partnership with Nashua Community College. Five New Hampshire residents graduated from the program and were offered jobs with area companies.

Granite State Manufacturing in Nashua and Manchester, Mercury Systems in Hudson, Spraying Systems in Merrimack, and Sweeney Metals in Nashua each made offers to the newly trained graduates.

“Congratulations to the five New Hampshire graduates of the pilot Machinist Pipeline Program. This program will strengthen our state’s role in the defense shipbuilding sector, and I’m excited to see the future opportunities it will create for our communities,” said Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), a senior member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. “I want to thank SENEDIA and the hardworking team at Nashua Community College for developing this talent pipeline and creating world-class opportunities for New Hampshire families. I look forward to seeing the expansion of these critical training programs and will continue to fight for the defense workforce funding needed to grow talent right here in New Hampshire.”
“The Defense Cluster represents $12.5 billion in annual economic output in New Hampshire, and more than $119 billion across the New England region. To sustain the strength of the industry and further grow businesses locally and regionally, we need a robust talent pipeline to meet the needs of tomorrow,” said Molly Donohue Magee, SENEDIA executive director. “Programs like this are a win-win, for the participants pursuing new career pathways and for the businesses in need of a skilled workforce.”

The Machinist Pipeline Program is a 10-week, hands-on training program to prepare participants for entry-level CNC and machinist positions. They received stipends and other financial support during the training thanks to MY TURN, an organization funded through New Hampshire Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding that serves economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged communities and connects them with workforce recruitment, education, preparation, and placement services.

A typical training day would begin with lectures and coursework at Nashua Community College, followed by shop floor training using CNC machines and related software.

“The men and women who serve within the defense industrial base are the future of our nation and will define where we go in the next decade, generation, and century,” said Rear Admiral Scott Pappano, program executive officer, Strategic Submarines on the importance of building America’s submarine fleet in an environment of increasing global threat. “The most important thing we need right now is to re-establish and continue to grow manufacturing; I’m glad we are making that a priority through talent pipeline programs.”

The five graduates from this initial pilot cohort developed meaningful skills and technical competencies to begin rewarding and good-paying careers, as well as soft skills and professional connections to serve them throughout their
careers.

Jose Arana was one of the five program graduates. He has accepted a position as machinist trainee at Spraying Systems Co. in Merrimack, NH.

“I was looking for a stable and good-paying career with a company doing meaningful work, and I’ve found that thanks to the Machinist Pipeline Program,” said Arana. “I’m grateful for the opportunity and I encourage anyone joining the workforce or considering a change to learn more about training and support available to start your career in defense.”

Ronny Soria, another graduate of the program indicated, “I was bouncing from job to job. No path or career in sight. I heard about a ten-week program in manufacturing and signed up. This is the best decision I have made. I learned a valued skill in machining. I also learned soft skills such as time management, how to interview and what makes a good employee. I feel I am very well prepared to start my manufacturing career.”

Soria has accepted an offer with Sweeney Metals in Nashua, NH.

The next cohort of the Machinist Pipeline Program is slated to begin in October.

“We care deeply about the success of our students at NCC, so we jump at every available opportunity to partner with industry leaders and companies looking to hire. After 10 weeks of rigorous training and education, aligned to the needs of employers, we now have five lifelong learners who are starting exciting new careers,” said Mark Dodge, the Precision Manufacturing professor at Nashua Community College. “With the support of our dedicated faculty, this pilot shows what is possible when we collaborate and innovate across academia and industry, and we’re eager to welcome the next cohort of students to our campus.”
“This program is excellent for not only the students but industry partners as well. We are taking people off the street and giving them a start to a career in manufacturing. They are walking away with the basic knowledge they need and numerous job opportunities. It is amazing to watch a student when the light goes on and he grasps the concept of the work. The staff and especially the Manufacturing staff got behind this program 110 percent and it shows in the five graduates,” said Jon Mason, the director of workforce development at Nashua Community College.

To learn more about SENEDIA and its submarine shipbuilding workforce development programming, visit Submarine.SENEDIA.org

TEXTRON SYSTEMS AWARDED UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (UAS) CONTRACTOR-OWNED/CONTRACTOR-OPERATED CONTRACT FOR THREE LITTORAL COMBAT SHIPS (LCS) BY U.S. NAVY

Release from Textron Systems

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August 9, 2023

AEROSONDE®AIR
AEROSONDE® UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (UAS) SUPPORTING SEVENTH U.S. NAVY SHIP WITH EXTENDED RANGE ISR SERVICES

Hunt Valley, Maryland, AUGUST 9, 2023 – Textron Systems Corporation, a Textron Inc. (NYSE: TXT) company, announced today that it has been awarded an initial contract valued at up to $19.5 million by the U.S. Navy’s Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) to provide UAS operational support to two Independence Class LCS and one Freedom Class LCS variants. This award joins the Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB)-4 and ESB-5, as well as two DDG-class ships, bringing the total number of U.S. Navy ships supported by the Aerosonde® UAS system to seven.

Textron Systems will deploy its Aerosonde UAS to provide mission overwatch and extended intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) services with enhanced mission payloads as seen aboard the ESB-5.

“Contractor-owned/contractor-operated contracts like this support the Navy’s continued investments in uncrewed assets for their ships,” said Wayne Prender, Senior Vice President, Air Systems. “We’ve seen the benefits of our Aerosonde UAS for DDG and ESB-class ships already, and we’re honored to be expanding into this new ship class, allowing us to continue supporting maritime domain awareness and missions while delivering operational and logistical capabilities.”

The Aerosonde system continues to set the standard for mission readiness and ease of use, amassing more than 600,000 flight hours serving multiple U.S. customers and allies. It is designed for expeditionary land- and sea-based operations with both fixed-wing and vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) options. Textron Systems has provided turnkey, UAS operations for customers around the world for more than 10 years.
NORFOLK, Va. (August 3, 2023)–Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) and Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group’s Expeditionary Reload Team stow simulated ordnance in the ship’s MK 71 Vertical Launch System (VLS) during a VLS re-arm demonstration held pier-side on Naval Station Norfolk, Aug. 3. The VLS demonstration was part of U.S. Fleet Forces Command’s Large Scale Exercise 2023 which provides a venue to test and refine current and new technologies and platforms to reinforce our current position as a supreme maritime force and provide feedback used to inform future innovation. (U.S. Navy photo by Bill Mesta)
NORFOLK, Va. – The crews of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) and Military Sealift Command’s dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) performed a MK 41 Vertical Launch System (VLS) re-arm, pier-side, at Naval Station Norfolk, Aug. 3.

The Navy conducted the demonstration to provide proof of concept that a dry cargo ammunition ship can reload the weapons system pier-side and while the ship is at sea, with a goal of expanding the capability of VLS reloading in expeditionary environments.

“The Navy has been considering alternative vessels to move ordnance into a theater without an on-shore infrastructure to support,” according to Jerit Vanauker, of MSC’s Taluga Group. “One of the situations considered was the ability to re-arm VLS for Navy combatant ships in a contested environment, and so we considered the idea to use an MSC dry cargo ammunition ship.”

In addition to the crews of Porter and William McLean, U.S. 2nd Fleet, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command’s (NECC) Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group (NAVELSG), the Carderock Division of the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) and NSWC Picatinny supported the VLS re-arming. NECC’s expeditionary reload team from NAVELSG are expertly trained in ordnance transfer and handling and can operate in remote, complex, and austere environments to ensure naval forces remain forward and mobile.

“MSC’s role in developing and executing VLS is vital,” Vanauker stated. “We will bring the ordnance, and platform to deliver ordnance, in support of VLS re-arming of our combatant
ships, so they can get back in the fight without traveling long distances to be resupplied.”

During the demonstration, Porter pulled into the naval station and moored ‘skin-to-skin’ along-side William McLean, which was moored to the pier. The ships’ crews installed marine bumpers between the vessels to prevent damage to the ships during the VLS re-arm.

Once the ships were safely moored, the VLS team aboard William McLean prepared two simulated ordnance packages for delivery.

“The VLS handling team prepared and reviewed the necessary procedures, ordnance handling equipment (OHE) and tools to conduct the VLS re-arm,” said Vanauker. “All procedures were reviewed, OHE and tools were inspected and a safety brief was conducted.”

“Once inspection was complete, the canister was loaded into the tilt-fixture and vertical strong-back, secured and then attached to the crane hook,” he continued. “The tilt-fixture and vertical strong-back allows the canister to be tilted into a vertical position with assistance from the ship’s crane.”

Using the Mclean’s crane, two simulated missiles were lifted from the ship’s flight deck and swung over to Porter’s forward weapons cells. Porter’s VLS team received the simulated ordnance and stowed the missiles aboard in the ship’s MK 41 Vertical Launch System.

“The crane operator, with assistance from the Signalman, swung the simulated ordnance over to Porter, placing it over the open module cell hatch, and lowered into alignment with the available cell,” Vanauker continued. “In all, performing a VLS re-arm is a very simple evolution which requires patience and focus.”
The crane for the VLS re-arm demonstration was operated by Boatswain’s Mate Justin Bradley, one of William McLean’s Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARs).

“This was the first VLS re-arm to take place aboard William McLean,” according to Capt. John Stulz, USNS William McLean’s Master. “Our CIVMARs secured the USS Porter alongside, operated the crane and provided support on deck for this evolution. Cargo and ordnance operations are a part of daily life for MSC ships.”

“The crew of the William McLean performed with precision and professionalism during this movement, just like our counterparts do every day around the globe,” Stulz added.

The VLS re-arm demonstration was conducted as part of U.S. Fleet Forces’ Large Scale Exercise 2023 (LSE).

“Expeditionary logistics allow the Navy to quickly return to maintaining maritime dominance,” said Rear Adm. Brad Andros, Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. “Operating in support of Military Sealift Command during Large Scale Exercise 2023 provides our expeditionary reload teams the opportunity to train to different platforms so that they can continue to sustain capacity and increase the persistent combat power of naval forces.”

LSE 2023 provided a venue to test and refine current and new technologies and platforms to reinforce our current position as a supreme maritime force and provide feedback used to inform future innovation. LSE 2023 includes six Navy and Marine Corps component commands and seven U.S. numbered Fleets, including U.S. Fleet Cyber Command/U.S. 10th Fleet, operating seamlessly across 22 time zones.
SAN DIEGO – The keel for the future USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209), the Navy’s 5th John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company’s (GD NASSCO) shipyard in San Diego, August 8.

A keel laying is the recognition of the start of a ship’s construction. It is the union of a ship’s modular components and the authentication or etching of an honoree’s initials into a ceremonial keel plate. In recognition of their
steadfast spirit and patriotic devotion over the past two decades to unite approximately 100 ships with ship sponsors, ship introduction specialists and ship sponsors Alicia Aadnesen and Debbie Simmons etched their initials into the keel plate of the future USNS Lucy Stone.

The ship is named for American suffragist Lucy Stone, who joined other notable advocates such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Ernestine Rose, and Antoinette Brown Blackwell to petition for suffrage and abolition in the 19th century. Her efforts as a founder of the Women’s National Loyal League were essential to the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

“The future Lucy Stone’s keel laying is a significant milestone, and we are excited to mark the beginning of great achievements to come for this ship,” said John Lighthammer, program manager, Auxiliary and Special Mission Shipbuilding Program Office. “The fifth John Lewis-class oiler will enhance the fleet’s ability to refuel ships at sea.”

The oilers feature substantial volume for oil, a significant dry cargo capacity and aviation capability. The vessels have double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks. T-AOs will add capacity to the Navy’s Combat Logistics Force and become the cornerstone of the fuel delivery system.

GD NASSCO is also in production on future T-AOs, USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) and USNS Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210). They are also under contract on future USNS Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211), USNS Ruth Bader Ginsburg (T-AO 212) and T-AO 213.

As one of the Defense Department’s largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, special mission and support ships, and boats and
BOLLINGER SHipyards Cuts Steel on Prototype Module of First US-Built Heavy Icebreaker in 50 Years

Release from Bollinger Shipyards

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Prototype module will become the foundation of new Polar
PASCAGOULA, Miss., – (August 9, 2023) – Bollinger Shipyards LLC (“Bollinger”) has begun cutting steel at Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS on the first of eight prototype modules that will become the foundation of the first U.S. Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter (PSC), USCGC Polar Sentinel (PSC-1) – the first heavy icebreaker to be built in the United States in 50 years.

“Today marks a significant step for both Bollinger Shipyards and the United States,” said Ben Bordelon, President and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. “After over 50 years, we’re back to building heavy icebreakers. We’re honored that responsibility lies with Bollinger. Beginning work on the first Prototype Fabrication Assembly Unit is an important step closer toward commencing construction on the first Polar Security Cutter. This isn’t just an important milestone for our company, it’s also an important step for our national defense. Simply put, the United States is back in the icebreaker business.”

The hull of a heavy polar icebreaker is required to be much thicker than other Coast Guard cutters because of the pressure exerted on the ship by the surrounding ice. Therefore, before the full construction process on the PSC program begins, the prototype modules test the new systems, processes, people, and tools that are required to work with the specialized steel. The lessons learned from building the prototype module will be used to help ensure design completeness and improve the quality and efficiency of the manufacturing process.

“We’re relearning how to build this type of ship,” said PSC program manager Capt. Eric Drey. “It’s the first heavy icebreaker built by our nation in 50 years. It’s not just a big day for the Coast Guard, but a big day for the nation.”

Each module requires approximately four months of labor, during which time Bollinger will continue recruiting and
training additional members of the workforce to manage the transition to production of the lead hull as the prototype modules are completed.

The Coast Guard’s operational polar icebreaking fleet currently consists of one heavy icebreaker, the 399-foot Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star that was commissioned in 1976, and one medium icebreaker, the 420-foot Coast Guard Cutter Healy that was commissioned in 1999.

ABOUT the Polar Security Cutter (PSC) program

The U.S. Coast Guard requires polar icebreaking capability to support the country’s economic, commercial, maritime and national security needs in the Polar Regions. The new Polar Security Cutters (PSCs) will be national assets that will ensure access to both polar regions and be capable of executing key Coast Guard missions, including defense readiness; marine environmental protection; ports, waterways and coastal security; and search and rescue. The ships will operate worldwide and face the range of extreme environmental conditions found in the polar, tropical and temperate regions.

USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120) Arrives Home
PEARL HARBOR, HI, UNITED STATES – The Navy’s newest Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120), and its crew arrived at the ship’s new home port of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Aug. 7.

USS Carl M. Levin is the first naval ship named in honor of Michigan’s longest serving senator, the late Carl M. Levin, for his years of service as a longtime member and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Levin began his career as an attorney, professor, and assistant attorney general in Michigan and was elected to the Senate in 1979. Levin chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee from 2001 – 2003 and from 2007 until his retirement. He was Michigan’s first Jewish senator and the state’s longest-serving senator, serving for 36 years before retiring.
in 2015.

“USS Carl M. Levin honors the legacy and achievements of a great American senator who always placed service of others above self,” said Cmdr. Kelly Craft, Carl M. Levin’s commanding officer. “Symbolized in U.S. steel, the crew has worked tirelessly to bring her to life and sail her to our homeport of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. We are proud to join our comrades in the defense of Hawaii, ready to take on any challenge and always remain tenacious in the fight.”

During Carl M. Levin’s transit to Hawaii, the ship made port calls to major naval ports including Newport, Rhode Island., Norfolk, Virginia, Mayport, Florida, and San Diego, California. Additionally, the crew stopped in Oranjestad, Aruba, before continuing through the Panama Canal and visiting Manta, Ecuador. Throughout their journey, Carl M. Levin accomplished numerous certifications and evolutions including, underway replenishments at sea, flight quarters, gun shoots, small boat operations, and many more.

The ship was christened on Oct. 2, 2021 at the Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, and commissioned in on June 24, 2023, in Baltimore.

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific is to manage the overall warfighting capability of the Surface Combatant Force homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii; to coordinate the mating, operations, combat systems, engineering, maintenance, training, logistics, administration, and support of assigned units to achieve the highest levels of combat readiness.

As in integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific in addition to providing realistic and relevant training necessary to execute the U.S. Navy’s timeless roles of sea control and power
projection. U.S. 3rd Fleet works in close coordination with other numbered fleets to provide commanders with capable, ready forces to deploy forward and win in day-to-day competition, in crisis, and in conflict.

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GA-ASI Advances Ecosystem for Autonomously Operational UCAV
SAN DIEGO – 09 August 2023 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) advanced its ability to operationalize the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV) ecosystem by combining advanced autonomy and government-provided human-machine interface (HMI) hardware. A GA-ASI-owned Avenger® Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) was paired with “digital twin” aircraft to autonomously conduct Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC) multi-objective collaborative combat missions.

The flights, which took place on July 13, 2023, from GA-ASI’s Desert Horizon Flight Operations Facility in El Mirage, Calif., demonstrate the company’s commitment to maturing its UCAV ecosystem for Autonomous Collaborative Platforms (ACP). The ecosystem’s goal is to rapidly integrate best-of-breed capabilities in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), mission-relevant interfaces, and other capabilities from third-party providers at the speed of relevance for 21st century conflicts.

The team demonstrated Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUM-T) using
the U.S. Air Force’s Project FoX system, which included a touchscreen tablet for fighter cockpits. The tablet provided control and monitoring of advanced autonomy while it conducted a multi-objective combat mission consisting of LVC entities. Mission autonomy capabilities focused on optimized search and signature management. Search optimization autonomy behaviors were provided by Scientific Systems Company, Inc. (SSCI). These skills were integrated into and orchestrated by government-furnished equipment (GFE) autonomy core architecture enhanced by GA-ASI. The flexibility of the GFE autonomy core software stack enabled rapid, seamless integration of one of SSCI’s multi-UAS behaviors. Autonomous trajectories were calculated by SSCI algorithms and subsequently communicated to GA-ASI’s autonomy core for translation to vehicle routes. SSCI provided an array of behaviors using its Collaborative Mission Autonomy suite where the software adapts to mission contingencies such as system failures, connectivity dropout, and combat losses to ensure successful tactical execution.

“The concepts demonstrated by these flights set the standard for operationally relevant mission systems capabilities on UCAV platforms,” said GA-ASI Senior Director of Advanced Programs Michael Atwood. “Our integration of the emerging FoX system accelerates speed to ramp for emerging collaborative air-to-air capabilities. The combination of airborne high-performance computing, sensor fusion, human-machine teaming, and AI pilots making decisions at the speed of relevance shows how quickly GA-ASI’s capabilities are maturing as we move to operationalize autonomy for UCAVs.”

The signature management skill, based on deep reinforcement learning, was developed by GA-ASI. Skill development leveraged GA-ASI’s novel Reinforcement Learning (RL) architecture that was designed using agile software methodology and industry-standard tools such as Docker and Kubernetes. Commanded using the FoX tablet, the RL agent navigated to an operator-
identified target while minimizing the radar cross section (RCS). This MUM-T, facilitated via open mission system (OMS) messages and alignment to the newest government architectures, demonstrated real-time operator tasking and supervision of an autonomous platform as it conducted its mission.

The team used a government-furnished autonomy core engine and the government-standard OMS messaging protocol to enable communication between the RL agents and the LVC system. Utilizing government standards such as OMS will make rapid integration of autonomy for UCAVs possible. In addition, GA-ASI used a General Dynamics EMC2 to run the autonomy architecture. EMC2 is an open architecture Multi-Function Processor with multi-level security infrastructure to run the autonomy architecture, demonstrating the ability to bring high-performance computing resources to UCAVs to perform quickly tailorable mission sets depending on the operational environment.

GA-ASI is demonstrating its commitment to maturing an autonomy infrastructure to enable rapid integration and validation of third-party tactical software applications from an App Store and maintaining safety of flight. This is another in an ongoing series of autonomous flights performed by GA-ASI using internal research and development funding to prove out important AI/ML concepts for UAS.