

GA-ASI Delivers First MQ-9A Extended Range to USMC's VMUT-2



SAN DIEGO – 30 April 2024 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) celebrated the delivery of the first MQ-9A Extended Range (ER) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) to Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Training Squadron 2 (VMUT-2). The delivery of the MQ-9A ER on March 18, 2024, is part of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Program, which ordered eight MQ-9A ER UAS as part of the ARES Indefinite-Delivery/Indefinite-Quantity (ID/IQ) contract.

“It’s exciting to make this first delivery to VMUT-2, which continues to build the relationship between GA-ASI, the USMC, and NAVAIR (Naval Air Systems Command),” said GA-ASI vice president of DoD Strategic Development Patrick Shortsleeve. “GA-ASI has been a contracted warfighting partner of the USMC for several years and VMUT-2’s ability to produce aircrews for the USMC is a tremendous advancement in the USMC’s organic

capability.”

VMUT-2 is a UAS training squadron for the USMC based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, North Carolina.

The MQ-9A ER is designed with field-retrofittable capabilities such as wing-borne fuel pods and reinforced landing gear that extend the aircraft’s endurance to more than 30 hours while further increasing its operational flexibility. The aircraft provides long-endurance, persistent surveillance capabilities with Full-Motion Video and Synthetic Aperture Radar/Moving Target Indicator/Maritime Mode Radar. An extremely reliable aircraft, MQ-9A ER is equipped with a fault-tolerant flight control system and a triple-redundant avionics system architecture. It is engineered to meet and exceed manned aircraft reliability standards.

April 29 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, April 29, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 10:00 a.m. and 5:20 p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 29, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired three anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) and three UAVs from Yemen into the Red Sea towards MV Cyclades, a Malta-flagged, Greece-owned vessel. Initial reports indicate there were no injuries and the vessel continued on its way.

Earlier, at 7:49 a.m., U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one Houthi launched airborne unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) on a flight path towards USS Philippine Sea and USS Laboon in the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damages reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

It was determined the UAV presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

BlueHalo to Test C-UAS System on Marine Corps JLTV



By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – BlueHalo will be testing its LOCUST Laser Weapon System on a U.S. Marine Corps Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV), the company's chief executive officer (CEO) said.

BlueHalo's primary focus is on defeating Group 1, 2, and 3 unmanned aerial systems (UAS), as well as counter-rocket and

counter-mortar systems, said Jonathan Moneymaker, CEO of Blue Halo, in an interview with *Seapower*.

“As the foundation of P-HEL, BlueHalo’s LOCUST Laser Weapon System (LWS) combines precision optical and laser hardware with advanced software, artificial intelligence (AI), and processing to enable and enhance the directed energy “kill chain,” the company said in a release. “LOCUST LWS addresses the inherent need for mobility and quick deployment—tracking, identifying, and engaging of a wide variety of targets with its hard-kill high energy laser.

“We look at it from an integrated layered defense strategy,” Moneymaker said. “Five years ago, we saw the evolution of drone warfare, today one of the fastest-evolving threat vectors. We wanted to engage that from a variety of modalities. We offer solutions and products that range from passive detection in our Skyview product to RF detect-and-defeat in our Titan product, our LOCUST Laser Weapon System, expanding into more global C2 [command and control], and starting to expand into our next-gen kinetic interceptor.

As of April 2024, BlueHalo had delivered two P-HEL systems to the U.S. Army, which has deployed them to unspecified locations.

“It is most certainly [deployed] in areas of conflict,” Moneymaker said. “It’s real, it’s deployable, it’s reliable, and frankly needed to bring service members home.”

“We’re very proud to be the first operationally deployed [HEL] system,” Moneymaker said, noting that its system has surpassed operational 10,000 hours and that the customer having a system that “has finally reached a level of reliability that they’ve been looking for as they’ve been fielding these capabilities.”

He said that the next expansion would be a mobile high-energy laser weapon – on an infantry squad vehicle or a JLTV. The

first mobile system was delivered in late March.

“The JLTV integration will be on the Marine Corps’ JLTV, so we’ve been working with all of the services as it relates to deployment of LOCUST,” he said. “We certainly have been having initial conversations with afloat Navy on how can we deploy these systems in the best configuration to counter some of the activity we’re seeing in the Red Sea.”

Moneymaker said he sees great potential in the “proven, ready [P-HEL] system” for naval use with its roll-on/roll-off capability.

The work for the Marine JLTV is through the Department of the Navy’s Ground-Based Air Defense program, as well as through the Joint Capabilities Office and U.S. Army Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office (RCCTO).

Moneymaker said the LOCUST is very effective against a [drone] swarm, noting that the capability is part of the test criteria. The LOCUST uses Wizard artificial intelligence and machine learning for target identification and aimpoint recognition.

The P-HEL is powered by a generator or batteries, and the company is looking at how to tie the HEL into shipboard power.

The company’s HEL is built primarily at the BlueHalo campus in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with work expanding to Huntsville, Alabama, and Rockville, Maryland. BlueHalo, headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, employs 2,400 workers and is approaching revenue of \$1 billion annually. The company has other facilities in Dayton, Ohio, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Anacapa Decommissioned after 34 Years of Service



From U.S. Coast Guard 13th District, April 29, 2024

SEATTLE – The Coast Guard decommissioned the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Anacapa (WPB 1335) during a ceremony, Friday, in Port Angeles, Washington.

Rear Adm. Charles Fosse, commander, Coast Guard 13th District, presided over the ceremony honoring the 34 years of service the Anacapa and its crews provided to the nation.

Commissioned in 1990, Anacapa was one of 49 Island-class cutters built in Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, Louisiana and was originally homeported in Petersburg, Alaska for more

than three decades.

“The cutter Anacapa has been a reliable and highly effective presence in our nation’s coastal waters for more than 30 years, conducting life-saving missions, ensuring preservation of precious natural resources and contributing to national security,” said Fosse. “I want to thank the crew serving today, and all who served aboard Anacapa over these many years, for their dedication and service to our country.”

While homeported in Port Angeles, the Anacapa successfully conducted numerous missions. Notably, in August 2022, the Anacapa rescued three people from a disabled sailboat and conducted an overnight tow of the vessel. Additionally, in April 2023, the Anacapa responded and assisted in the safe evacuation of 600 passengers when the Walla Walla ferry grounded in Rich Passage.

“Even though the Anacapa had a short stay in her Port Angeles home port after cutter Cuttyhunk was decommissioned, she filled the remainder of Coast Guard coverage needed in the Pacific Northwest,” said Chief Warrant Officer Holly Campbell, Anacapa’s commanding officer. “The crews of the Anacapa have held the highest standard of excellence in serving our area of responsibility with pride, professionalism and resiliency throughout their tours of duty. The Anacapa has stood the watch for 34 years of honorable service to our nation. Fair winds and following seas during your last voyage, Anacapa. Thank you for your service.”

Following the decommissioning ceremony, the Anacapa will transit to the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland, and will be placed in the Cutter Transition Division.

Commander Marforpac Visits Palau



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. William M. Journey, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, greets Minister of State for the Republic of Palau Gustav Aitaro, left, and U.S. Ambassador for Palau Joel Ehrendreich, center left, at the Palau International Airport, Apr. 24. Journey traveled to Palau to meet with local and military leaders to discuss regional defense partnerships and opportunities. Palau is one of the Compact of Free Association states aligned with the United States, which provides defense, funding, and access to social services. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Samantha Jetzer)

From Deputy AC/S, Communication Strategy & Operations

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific

April 26, 2024

CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii – Lt. Gen. William M. Journey, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, made an official visit to the Republic of Palau April 24-25, after participating in opening ceremonies for Exercise Balikatan in the Philippines.

The Republic of Palau is one of the Compact of Free Association states aligned with the United States, which provides defense, funding, and access to social services. Lt. Gen. Journey's visit to Palau underscores the importance and depth of commitment the United States has for the U.S.-Palau partnership.

"Palau has proven to be a long-standing friend of the United States in the Pacific. We thank President Whipps, Jr. for his steadfast support for the U.S. military presence, which helps maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific," said Lt. Gen. Journey. "We are grateful for the hospitality that Palau shows to the Marine Corps, and are proud of the contributions Marines have made to improving Palau's infrastructure and serving the people of Palau."

Previous deployments to Palau have seen U.S. Marines and Sailors provide expertise in engineering, medical, maritime law enforcement, and explosive ordnance disposal capabilities. Some of the projects Pacific Marines have recently undertaken in Palau include restoration of the Peleliu airstrip, the construction of a weapons firing range, and renovation of the Peleliu World War II Museum, significant because of the upcoming 80th anniversary commemoration of the battle for Peleliu on September 15.

"The Marines have a deep and enduring connection to the people of Palau, both through community service as well as the many Palauans who have served in the Corps," said U.S. Ambassador to Palau Joel Ehrendreich.

Lt. Gen. Journey pledged to build on the long history the Marine Corps shares with the people of Palau.

“We are committed to continuing the long and proud legacy of the Marine Corps working with the people of Palau as we secure and maintain a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.”

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific is the largest operational command in the Marine Corps. It comprises two-thirds of the Marine Corps’ active-duty combat forces, collectively known as the “Pacific Marines.” Pacific Marines serve as an expeditionary force-in-readiness. They operate as air-ground-logistics teams, and are forward positioned and actively employed throughout the Indo-Pacific every day. Pacific Marines live and work alongside the joint force and like-minded allies and partners to prevent conflict, respond to crisis, and if the Nation calls, to fight and win.

April 28 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, April 28, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 1:48 and 2:27 a.m. (Sanaa time), April 28, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) successfully engaged five airborne unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the Red Sea.

It was determined the UAVs presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

USS George Washington Deploys to U.S. Southern Command, Eventually Headed to Japan



NORFOLK (April 25, 2024) The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) departs Naval Station Norfolk, April 25, 2024, for a deployment to the U.S. Southern Command area of operations as part of Southern Seas 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Maxwell Orlosky)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – A major homeport shift involving two Nimitz-class aircraft carriers is underway with the April 25, 2024, departure of USS George Washington (CVN 73) from Norfolk, Virginia, to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility.

The voyage will take the carrier to NAS North Island, California, where it will embark Carrier Air Wing Five (CVW-5) from USS Ronald Reagan and replace that carrier as the one forward-deployed to the U.S. Seventh Fleet in Yokosuka, Japan.

Embarked in the George Washington are the Carrier Strike Group 10 staff and aircraft and personnel of Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW-7).

“USS George Washington (CVN 73), along with USS Porter (DDG 78) and USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189), are scheduled to conduct passing exercises and operations at sea with partner nation maritime forces as the ships circumnavigate South America,” Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic said in an April 24 Facebook post. “Engagements are planned with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, with port visits planned for Brazil, Chile, and Peru.”

The George Washington was the forward-deployed carrier based in Japan from 2008 until 2015, when it was replaced in Japan by the Ronald Reagan. In 2017, the George Washington entered a Refueling and Complex Overhaul at the Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Newport News Shipbuilding yard in Virginia, an evolution that took six years, including the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The George Washington’s nuclear propulsion plant is fueled to run another 25 years.

Red Sea Update

SEAPOWDER

The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

U.S. Central Command, 26 April, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At 9:52 a.m. (Sanaa time) on April 25, one anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) was launched from Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen into the Gulf of Aden. There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

Separately, between 12:19 p.m. and 4:17 p.m. (Sanaa time), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) successfully engaged and destroyed one unmanned surface vessel (USV) and one unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined that the ASBM, USV, and UAV presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

U.S. Central Command, April 24, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At [11:51](#) a.m. (Sanaa time) on April 24, a coalition vessel successfully engaged one anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) launched from Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-

controlled areas in Yemen over the Gulf of Aden. The ASBM was likely targeting the MV Yorktown, a U.S.-flagged, owned, and operated vessel with 18 U.S. and four Greek crew members. There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

Separately, between [12:07](#) pm and [1:26](#) pm, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) successfully engaged and destroyed four airborne unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined that the ASBM and UAVs presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

U.S. Begins Construction on Temporary Pier to Deliver Humanitarian Aid to Gaza

Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS)

- What is JLOTS:

U.S. Army and U.S. Navy forces organized and equipped to conduct joint ship-to-shore operations where fixed port facilities are inadequate or unavailable.



- What JLOTS can do:

Offload equipment and cargo in-stream (offshore) and deliver cargo to a restricted port, an expeditionary floating pier, or a bare beach employing shallow draft transport watercraft.



The Defense Department announced it would implement a Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore capability from the Mediterranean Sea to provide logistics access to Gaza. The capability will allow for the distribution of humanitarian supplies in Gaza, including as many as two million meals a day.

April 25, 2024 | By Joseph Clark, DOD News

U.S. military personnel have begun construction of a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to deliver critical humanitarian assistance, senior defense and Biden administration officials said today.

Construction of the pier is expected to be completed in early May. Once completed, it will initially facilitate the delivery of an estimated 90 truckloads of international aid into Gaza and scale to up to 150 truckloads once fully operational.

The beginning of construction marks a significant milestone following President Joe Biden's call for the military to conduct the emergency operation during his State of the Union Address last month.

Soldiers from the Army's 7th Transportation Brigade at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, and sailors from Naval Beach

Group 1 at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, California, were tapped to deploy the Defense Department's Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore capability, or JLOTS.

The first of several watercraft used to construct the pier began the weeklong transit to the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility less than two days after Biden's address.

Officials underscored today that no U.S. boots will be on the ground in Gaza as part of the operation.

The U.S. has coordinated with the Israeli Defense Force to provide force protection for U.S. personnel operating at sea. The U.S. has also coordinated with an IDF engineering unit to receive the pier on the shore in Gaza once the construction at sea is complete.

"The effort to deliver humanitarian assistance from the sea is fully supported by the Israeli Defense Force with whom we have been and will continue to work very closely – from fixing the JLOTS pier to the shore to providing force protection," a senior defense official said. "This effort is fully integrated with the IDF."

The official added that the U.S. is also bringing "significant force protection as a prudent measure" and will continue to closely monitor the security environment to ensure the safety of U.S. forces.

"We assess that the security environment around the area of Gaza that we've chosen to establish the JLOTS site is sufficient to support execution of the mission," the official said. "But importantly, we reassess security every single day. And as he would do in any mission, the commander of U.S. Central Command will make a final determination on moving forward with JLOTS placement based on the security situation at the time."

Delivering the capability involves the complex choreography of

logistics support and landing craft vessels that carry the equipment used to construct an approximately 1,800-foot causeway comprised of modular sections linked together, which is known as a Trident Pier.

The units are also constructing a 72-foot wide by 270-foot long roll-on, roll-off discharge facility, which will remain about three miles off Gaza's shore and enable cargo ships to offload aid shipments at sea prior to being transported to shore.

About 1,000 soldiers and sailors are involved in the operation.

DOD is working closely with the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has begun coordinating international assistance. Aid providers have begun staging cargo in Cyprus for delivery via the maritime corridor once the pier is in place.

"Work on the maritime corridor is progressing along the expected timeline," a senior administration official said. "This is a complex operation which requires close coordination with many partners, and we're grateful for the work of our partners in this effort."

IKE Carrier Strike Group Arrives in the Eastern Mediterranean



From U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, 26 April 2024

ARABIAN SEA – The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (IKECSG) arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean while on a pre-announced Department of Defense deployment, April 26.

The Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gravelly (DDG 107) entered the Eastern Mediterranean after transiting through the Suez Canal, April 26.

CSGs bring to the region additional aviation and surface assets, providing greater flexibility and maritime capability to the U.S. 6th Fleet.

“The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group has delivered exceptional naval power in the U.S. 5th Fleet for the last five months,” said Rear Adm. Marc Miguez, commander, CSG-2,

IKECSG. "Reentry into the U.S. 6th Fleet is only a small gesture of our ability to project combat superiority to any part of the globe."

While operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet, the IKECSG conducted operations in the Red Sea, Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Gulf including Operation Prosperity Guardian and self-defensive strikes into Iranian-backed Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

The strike group is commanded by Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 2 and comprised of flagship Dwight D. Eisenhower, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 3 with its nine squadrons, USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 22, with the guided-missile destroyers USS Gravely (DDG 107) and USS Mason (DDG 87).

Squadrons of CVW-3 include the "Gunslingers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 105, the "Fighting Swordsmen" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 32, the "Rampagers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 83, the "Wildcats" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 131, the "Screwtops" of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 123, the "Zappers" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 130, the "Dusty Dogs" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 7, the "Swamp Foxes" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 74 and the "Rawhides" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40.

IKECSG units departed their homeports of Norfolk, Virginia, and Mayport, Florida, on Oct. 13 & 14 for a scheduled deployment.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.