Joint Effort to Clear Baltimore Bridge Debris Launches Over Weekend

April 1, 2024 | By Matthew Olay, DOD News

Multiple Defense Department assets teamed with state, federal and private sector agencies in Baltimore Harbor Saturday to begin removing wreckage from the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse.

“The continues to support the whole-of-government response in Baltimore. Through the Unified Command, the U.S. Coast Guard is coordinating this effort in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Navy and many others,” Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters during a meeting today.

Crews of highly trained demolition experts began cutting into the top portion of the collapsed bridge’s north side on Saturday, and the Army Corps of Engineers completed a required

underwater survey – both necessary steps prior to removal of debris, Singh said.

Meanwhile, Naval Sea Systems Command is aiding Unified Command's efforts to clear out debris and reopen the harbor by contracting out the 1,000-ton lift capacity derrick barge Chesapeake, the 200-ton lift capacity revolving crane barge Ferrell and the 150-ton lift capacity crane barge Oyster Bay. All are on scene in Baltimore Harbor.

An additional, 400-ton lift capacity barge is scheduled to arrive next week, according to a news release distributed this afternoon by Navy public affairs.

On Sunday, Coast Guard Capt. David O'Connell, the federal on-scene coordinator for Key Bridge Response 2024, announced preparations for the establishment of a "temporary alternate channel on the northeast side of the main channel in the vicinity of the Francis Scott Key Bridge for commercially essential vessels," according to a Key Bridge Response 2024 press release.

"This will mark an important first step along the road to reopening the Port of Baltimore," O'Connell said.

In addition to over 1,000 engineering, construction, contracting and operations specialists with the Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard-led Unified Command's additional components include assets from the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Maryland Transportation Authority, the Maryland State Police and a private sector crisis and emergency management consulting firm.

" ready to assist in further efforts to provide immediate response, reopen the port, rebuild the bridge and support the people of Baltimore," Singh said.

US Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton completes four-month deployment, returns to homeport in Charleston

Crews from Coast Guard cutters Hamilton (WMSL 753) and Munro (WMSL 755) exchange cutter boats in the Pacific Ocean, March 12, 2024. Hamilton and Munro are national security cutters. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Ray Corniel)

U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 1, 2024

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL 753) returned to their homeport in North Charleston, Friday, following a four-month maritime safety and security patrol in the Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific

Ocean.

Patrolling in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast's Operation Vigilant Sentry and Joint Interagency Task Force – South's (JIATF-S) counterdrug mission, Hamilton's crew interdicted four vessels trafficking illicit narcotics, apprehended 10 suspected drug smugglers, rescued 47 migrants on an unsafe voyage at sea, and assisted six mariners in distress.

While underway, Hamilton worked to counter illicit maritime activities, strengthen partner nation ties, and facilitate the safety of life at sea. Hamilton interdicted 7,448 pounds of marijuana from four drug trafficking ventures worth more than $7 million. In support of JIATF-S, Hamilton assisted Panamanian and Costa Rican partners with two additional interdictions for a combined 5,800 pounds of cocaine, worth approximately $76 million.

On Christmas Eve, Hamilton's crew spotted a U.S.-flagged sailing vessel with three people aboard, requesting assistance during rough seas. Hamilton sent over a rescue and assistance team to assist them with retrieving their adrift dinghy, restored their engines, provided medical aid, and escorted them safely back to Florida. In another case, Hamilton spotted a Panamanian fishing vessel's crew waving for help. Hamilton deployed their rescue and assistance team to evaluate the nature of their distress. Once on-scene, they found three fishermen with their vessel adrift after fighting an engine fire. Hamilton provided medical aid and water while remaining on-scene until relieved by Panamanian authorities.

"I am so proud of our crew's flexibility, resiliency, and superb execution of duty," said Capt. Justin Carter, commanding officer of Hamilton. "We accomplished every task asked of us, whether countering drug smugglers, responding to unsafe migrant ventures, or aiding mariners at sea. Performing these missions required expert operation and maintenance of

our ship, boats, and aircraft, and our crew took care of each other through every challenge we faced."

Hamilton also conducted at-sea trainings with Coast Guard cutters Munro (WMSL 755), Bear (WMEC 901) and an MH-65 helicopter crew from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron.

Hamilton is one of four 418-foot National Security Cutters (NSC) homeported in Charleston. With its robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment, the NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard's fleet. NSCs are a world-wide deployable asset that supports Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and national objectives through drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, national defense, search and rescue, fisheries enforcement, and national intelligence collection.

For more information about Hamilton, visit https://www.atlanticarea.uscg.mil/Area-Cutters/CGCHAMILTON/.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit GoCoastGuard.com to learn about active duty, reserve, officer, and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found here.

April 1 Red Sea Update

U.S. Central Command, April 1, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At 9 a.m. (Sanaa time) April 1, United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed an

Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist unmanned surface vessel (USV) in self-defense.

It was determined this USV presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region.

These actions are necessary to protect our forces, ensure freedom of navigation, and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

NAS Sigonella Welcomes First MQ-4C Triton

Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Italy – The first MQ-4C Triton arrived at Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, March 30,

2024.
By Lt. j.g. Andrea Perez, Naval Air Station Sigonella Public Affairs, March 31, 2024

NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Italy – The first MQ-4C Triton arrived to Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, March 30, 2024.

The MQ-4C's arrival to the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations marks the second forward-deployed detachment for VUP-19. A total of three detachments are planned when the program is fully operational. Deployments like this enhance U.S. Navy interoperability with NATO Allies and partners.

"The addition of the MQ-4C Triton, right here in Sigonella, is another milestone in the successful development of the Triton program," said Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, Commanding Officer, NAS Sigonella. "We are proud to support VUP-19 [Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19] as they integrate with the Fleet to expand the roles of unmanned aircraft systems operations in our region and beyond."

The MQ-4C Triton is the Navy's newest Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Maritime Patrol asset and augments the capabilities of the P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

To prepare for the arrival of the Triton in Italy, VUP-19 "Big Red" held a ceremony to celebrate the deployment and the opening of a new Triton hangar at NAS Sigonella, March 2.

VUP-19, homeported in Florida at Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport, boasts more than 300 Sailors and officers from various aviation ratings and officer communities who maintain and operate the Triton around the world. Aircrew gather and process surveillance information utilizing data fusion tools that integrate sensor data from multiple aircraft into a comprehensive networked picture to further assist in building an accurate threat representation.

VUP-19 achieved initial operation capability in September 2023 during its deployment to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

Naval Air Station Sigonella provides consolidated operational, command and control, administrative, logistical and advanced logistical support to U.S. and other NATO forces. The installation’s strategic location enables U.S., allied, and partner nation forces to deploy and respond as required, ensuring security and stability in Europe, Africa and Central Command.

March 30 Red Sea Update

U.S. Central Command, March 31, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At 8:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) March 30, United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed two unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen in self-defense. One was engaged over the Red Sea and the other was engaged on the ground prepared to launch.

It was determined these unmanned aerial systems presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region.

These actions are necessary to protect our forces, ensure freedom of navigation, and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Marines receive last AV-8B Harrier pilot designations

An AV-8B Harrier II of Marine Attack Squadron 223. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Allmaras

2nd Lt. John W. Graham, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Public Affairs, 1 Apr 2024

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – The AV-8B Harrier II Fleet Replacement Detachment (FRD), Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 14, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), graduated the final two pilots to receive the 7509 Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, North Carolina, Friday.

Capt. Joshua Corbett and Capt. Sven Jorgensen completed their final training flight at the FRD in order to receive the 7509 MOS, which is reserved for AV-8B Harrier II qualified pilots. The flight, a low-altitude close air support training sortie, represents the culmination of the Marines' training at the FRD.

"The significance of the last replacement pilot training flight in the Harrier community is that it is the beginning of

the end for us as a community." said Corbett. "The Harrier, more than many aircraft than I have come across, elicits an emotional response. For members of the public, members of the aviation community, members of the Marine community, and especially members of the Harrier pilot community, it's bittersweet. All good things have to come to an end, and it's our turn soon, but not yet."

The Harrier is a vertical/short takeoff and landing (VSTOL) tactical attack aircraft. The first AV-8B Harrier II arrived at MCAS Cherry Point in January 1984. In their 40-year presence in the eastern North Carolina region, 2nd MAW Harriers, and the 7509s that pilot them, have supported numerous operations across the globe, including Operation Desert Storm, Operation Allied Force in 1999 in the former Yugoslavia, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Corbett's and Jorgensen's designation represents 2nd MAW's continued operational transition from legacy fixed-wing tactical aircraft, such as the Harrier.

As the Harrier transitions out of the Fleet Marine Force, its role is being filled by the F-35B Lightning II. Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 223 will be the last Harrier squadron in the Marine Corps and is set to continue operating the platform through September 2026. Until then, the platform will continue to call MCAS Cherry Point home and execute deployed operations as part of Marine Expeditionary Units.

"I am incredibly proud of the legacy of the AV-8B, both within Marine Aviation and here in eastern North Carolina." said Lt. Col. Nathaniel Smith, the Commanding Officer of VMA-223. "Our platform is part of the fabric of eastern North Carolina, as countless Marines, sailors, and civilians have contributed to our success for decades. It is exciting to see our last two students graduate from the FRD and hit the fleet. Our team of pilots, maintainers, and supporting staff have done outstanding work in supporting both the FRD and VMA missions here at VMA-223, and I look forward to us continuing to

support 2nd MAW and the MAGTF at home and overseas.”

Both pilots will report to VMA-223 after completing the FRD syllabus.

Navy Resources Arrive in Baltimore to Support Key Bridge Efforts

By Navy Public Affairs, 1 April 2024

BALTIMORE – The Chesapeake, a 1000-ton lift capacity derrick barge, the Ferrell, a 200-ton lift capacity revolving crane barge, and the Oyster Bay, a 150-ton lift capacity crane barge have arrived to Baltimore Harbor. An additional 400-ton lift capacity barge is on track to arrive early next week. The barges, contracted through Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) will support the U.S. Coast Guard led Unified Command in its effort to clear and re-open the channel.

The barges will be used by the Navy’s Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (SUPSALV) to remove submerged portions of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. SUPSALV will accomplish the work in phases. Following an overall assessment, work will focus on disassembling and removing the bridge section by section. The disassembled pieces will be lifted onto barges, which will then be transported away.

An additional 12 crane and support vessels to include tugs, survey, dive and crew boats, are in the mobilization process and will arrive to Baltimore in the coming days. SUPSALV will manage the operation and use of all assets to provide centralized oversight of all salvage operations.

SUPSALV is a world leader in the ocean engineering discipline of marine salvage, towing, pollution control and abatement, diving and diving system safety, salvage equipment procurement and underwater ship husbandry.

RTX’s SM-6 intercepts ballistic missile target at sea

Test of enhanced software succeeds against sophisticated medium-range ballistic missile

PACIFIC MISSILE RANGE FACILITY, Hawaii (March 29, 2024) – A Standard Missile-6 (SM-6) built by Raytheon, an RTX (NYSE: RTX) business, intercepted a medium-range ballistic missile target at sea in its final seconds of flight, after being fired from the USS Preble (DDG 88). This test verified some of the missile's enhanced capabilities when launched from a Baseline 9.C2 variant of the Aegis Combat System.

The SM-6 missile can perform anti-air warfare, anti-surface warfare and advanced ballistic missile defense at sea. This latest flight test, designated as Flight Test Aegis Weapon System (FTM)-32, involved the SM-6 Dual II (Block IA) configuration with newly qualified software that significantly enhances the missile's capabilities for the U.S. Navy fleet.

"This test demonstrated that the latest versions of the SM-6 and combat system provide the critical capability to destroy an incoming sophisticated missile threat," said Kim Ernzen, president of Raytheon Naval Power. "Raytheon is committed to ensuring our technology stays ahead of evolving threats and is

available to sailors as quickly as possible.”

FTM-32 was the seventh flight test of the SM-6 against ballistic missile targets and the fourth test utilizing the Dual II (Block IA) configuration.

Deployed on U.S. Navy ships, SM-6 delivers a proven over-the-horizon offensive and defensive capability by leveraging the time-tested Standard Missile airframe and propulsion system. It’s the only missile that supports anti-air warfare, anti-surface warfare and sea-based terminal ballistic missile defense in one solution, and it’s enabling the U.S. and its allies to cost-effectively increase the offensive might of surface forces.

The U.S. Department of Defense has approved the sale of SM-6 to several allied nations.

Leidos-designed low-profile vessels participate in U.S. Army’s Project Convergence Capstone 4 exercise

RESTON, Va. (March 29, 2024) – Two Leidos-designed uncrewed and autonomous-capable low-profile vessels (LPVs) recently participated in the Project Convergence Capstone 4 military exercises in California. Leidos (NYSE:LDOS), a Fortune 500 innovation company, delivered the vessels to the U.S. Marine Corps last year.

“Leidos once again designed and delivered innovative solutions with these LPVs, and it was great to see them participate in Project Convergence,” said Dave Lewis, Leidos senior vice president, Sea Systems Business Area. “The prototypes we’ve delivered will help create new disruptive logistics capabilities for the Marine Corps. Its low profile and long range are intended to help the vessels achieve a higher mission success rate supporting dispersed Marine fire units than conventional methods.”

The LPV’s low-to-the-water visual profile helps to reduce probability of detection. The vessels are intended to transport a logistics payload of up to five tons over a range of 2,000 nautical miles, and have been built to experiment

with different autonomous control systems. The two LPV prototypes were delivered last year to the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory for testing and technical assessment. Their participation in the joint and multi-national Project Convergence Capstone 4 exercises represents the next stage of testing and experimentation with the vessels' capabilities alongside warfighters.

Leidos designed the LPVs under contract with MilTech, a Montana State University research lab and an authorized National Government Partnership Intermediary.

The delivery of the LPV prototypes complements Leidos' extensive maritime autonomy portfolio. Leidos-designed and built autonomous vessels recently completed joint naval exercises in the western Pacific as part of the Navy's Integrated Battle Problem 23.2. Last year, Leidos was awarded a U.S. Navy task order to manage, operate and maintain the Navy's Overlord and medium unmanned surface vessels.

U.S. Navy and JSDF conduct Tomahawk Land Attack Missile Training

By MC1 Ryan M. Breeden, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, March 29, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan – Sailors assigned to Surface Combat Systems Training Command (SCSTC) hosted members from the Japan Self-Defense Force aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS McCampbell (DDG 85) and Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, to conduct tomahawk land attack missile

training, March 25-28.

The training provided Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) officers with the knowledge required to coordinate shipboard cruise missile operations in route to Full Operational Capability.

The United States Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, visited McCampbell to observe the shipboard portion of the training March 28.

“We are ahead of schedule, and that’s exactly what we have to do to keep up deterrence and maintain operations within this area of operations,” said Emanuel. “We will give our partners, our allies, the Japanese Navy, the capacity that their investing in. This is not a one and done, this is going to happen again.”

The training included classroom instruction, followed by a shipboard walkthrough and demonstration, aligned to the U.S. Navy cruise missile command curriculum.

“It was a privilege to conduct Cruise Missile Command training with our Japan Self-Defense Force counterparts over the past few days,” said Cmdr. Michael Arnold, Officer in Charge of SCSTC WESTPAC. “This training marks a significant milestone in Japan’s strategic acquisition of the Tomahawk Weapon Control System and our collaborative first step in mastering this new capability. Together, we fortify our alliance, demonstrating our united commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific and upholding the principles that ensure regional peace, stability, and a rules-based international order.”

The week-long training provided participants with a hands-on overview of the Tactical Tomahawk Weapons Control System consoles and associated equipment, and participants were able to execute a simulated generic strike mission scenario.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the largest forward-deployed fleet in the

world, and with the help of a network of alliances and partners from 35 other maritime-nations, the U.S. Navy has operated in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 70 years, providing credible, ready forces to help preserve peace and prevent conflict.