Navy receives final JPALS unit delivery

An F-35C Lightning II, from the “Rough Raiders” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 125, makes an arrseted gear landing on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz. Joint Precision Approach and Landing Systems (JPALS) has been supporting F-35B deployments on U.S. Navy LH-class amphibious assault ships since 2016 and F-35C deployments on U.S. Navy aircraft carriers since 2021.

Release from Naval Air Systems Command

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Mar 16, 2023

The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of the final Joint Precision Approach and Landing Systems (JPALS) unit March 16 marking another on-time or ahead of schedule delivery for increased capability at sea.

JPALS is a ship-relative GPS-based system that provides aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships with precision

approach and landing capability, surveillance, and over-the-air inertial alignment in all weather and mission environments.

“This is a significant milestone for the JPALS team and highlights the incredible efforts of hundreds of our teammates over the past decade who developed and now have fully delivered these critical systems that our Warfighters and International Partners need,” said Capt. Kevin Watkins, Naval Air Traffic Management Systems (PMA-213) program manager. “This team overcame many barriers over the past several years, successfully achieving the required outcome to deliver all of the capabilities needed, on time and affordably.”

JPALS is currently being deployed on all U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships, and is on the United Kingdom Royal Navy’s HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Italian Navy’s ITS Cavour. Japan became the third foreign military sale customer in December and is scheduled to be deployed on the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s JS Izumo in 2024.

JPALS has been supporting F-35B deployments on U.S. Navy LH-class amphibious assault ships since 2016 and F-35C deployments on U.S. Navy aircraft carriers since 2021. Initial operational capability was reached in May 2021 with full operational capability scheduled for fiscal year 2026.

Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast returns home following

counternarcotics patrol

Release from the United States Coast Guard

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March 16, 2023

ASTORIA, Ore. – The Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) and crew returned to their Astoria homeport, Tuesday, following a 69-day counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Steadfast's crew disrupted the flow of illegal narcotics on three separate occasions during their patrol preventing a combined total of more than 7,500 pounds of cocaine, valued at $85.6 million, from reaching the U.S. maritime borders.

The crew steamed more than 12,000 nautical miles conducting training, law enforcement missions, providing search-and-

rescue coverage, and conducting helicopter operations while patrolling the waters from their Astoria homeport to international waters off the coast of Central America.

The Steadfast deployed with a Jacksonville, Florida, based Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aircrew along with temporarily assigned crewmembers from the Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903), and soon-to-be-commissioned Coast Guard Cutter Argus (WMSM 915).

During nighttime patrol operations, Steadfast personnel were notified by a Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) of a suspected narcotics-smuggling vessel transiting international waters. Steadfast personnel launched an Over-the-Horizon (OTH) crew and boarding team who interdicted the vessel after a multi-hour pursuit. The suspected smugglers jettisoned contraband, resulting in the disruption of 2,260 pounds of cocaine, valued at $25.6 million.

Additionally, Steadfast’s crew tracked another suspected narcotics-smuggling vessel with the assistance of a Mexican Navy (SEMAR) surveillance aircraft and aircrew. Steadfast personnel launched an OTH boat crew and HITRON helicopter aircrew while the Mexican MPA tracked the vessel. Steadfast’s small boat and helicopter crews interdicted the suspected narcotics-smuggling vessel and seized 3,300 pounds of cocaine valued at $37.5 million.

“The successful coordination between a U.S. Coast Guard cutter and Mexican MPA was a significant step in advancing our strategic partnerships in combatting the flow of illicit narcotics in Eastern Pacific,” said Cmdr. Brock S. Eckel, Steadfast’s commanding officer.

The next day, Steadfast crew launched an OTH boat crew and HITRON aircrew to intercept another suspected smuggling

vessel. The aircrew located the suspected smuggling vessel and worked with a nearby Mexican Naval vessel to vector in a Mexican Naval helicopter. This multi-national effort resulted in the seizure of 1,984 pounds of cocaine valued at $22.5 million.

“From battling heavy seas off the Oregon and California coasts, to overcoming equipment casualties, and multiple smuggling vessel interdictions in the darkest of nights, the determination, resilience, and professionalism of the Steadfast crew was simply exceptional,” said Eckel. “The crew’s operational success was matched only by the strengthening of international and inter-agency relationships along the way. Steadfast’s crew once again proved their proficiency in working with partner nations jointly executing the counternarcotics mission successfully.”

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions for these interdictions by United States Attorney’s Offices throughout the country.

Commissioned in 1968, Steadfast is one of two 210-foot medium endurance cutters homeported in Astoria. The cutter and crew deploy along the western seaboard of North and Central America enforcing living marine resource laws and regulations, detecting and interdicting narcotics and migrant smuggling, and conducting search-and-rescue operations.

General Officer Announcement

Release from the Department of Defense

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MARCH 15, 2023

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James W. Bierman, Jr., for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general with assignment as deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. Bierman is currently serving as commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan.

PROFILES IN SERVICE – Chief Magda Fernandez

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Navy Concludes EOC Westpac Deployment of MQ-4C Triton

UAV

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ARLINGTON, Va.— The U.S. Navy is concluding the first deployment of a detachment of MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting (MISR&T) unmanned aerial vehicles, ending the Early Operational Capability deployment of the Triton, paving the way for the UAV's Initial Operational Capability.

Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, home-based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, deployed two MQ-4Cs to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in 2020 to provide MISR&T for the U.S. 7th Fleet while developing the concept of operations and the tactics to refine the Triton's operations. The detachment operated from Guam; Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan; and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, the Navy said in a March 16 release.

The two MQ-4Cs deployed from VUP-19's maintenance base in Naval Air Station Point Mugu, California. While deployed, the maintenance detachment moved to Naval Station Mayport, Florida, which is near the squadron's operations center in Jacksonville. One of the two deployed Tritons arrived in Mayport in December to be used for training.

The two deployed Tritons were of the baseline Integrated Functional Capability (IFC) 3 configuration. The squadron has since received newer versions in the IFC 4 configuration, which are equipped with a more capable sensor suite that will allow them to replace the Navy's fleet of EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The MQ-4C will supplement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

VUP-19 is scheduled to bring the Triton to Initial Operational Capability later in 2023 when it deploys a full "orbit" of Tritons to the 7th Fleet's Task Force 72. With a full orbit, a squadron detachment will be able to maintain a Triton on patrol 24/7.

Last October, Seapower reported that Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, said the fleet is working to build up an orbit "to learn our way through some of the capabilities that an EP-3 [Aries II Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft] might bring back. It will be a different way of processing the information than we do with our EP-3s, so we're working as a Navy to see how we seamlessly transition."

"VUP-19 plans to introduce this capability to more fleet areas around the globe, paving the way for future Navy unmanned systems," the Navy release said.

Marine Commandant is Bullish on Flight II LPD Capabilities

The Flight I amphibious transport dock ships USS San Antonio (LPD 17) and USS New York (LPD 21) in 2011 off the coast of Virginia. They are being succeeded by the Flight II LPD. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Edwin F. Bryan*

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WASHINGTON – The Marine Corps commandant praised the Flight II version of the San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship (LPD) and re-iterated his position that 31 large and medium amphibious warships is the minimum needed to enable amphibious power projection for the Marine Corps.

"The Flight II program is a huge success," said General David H. Berger, speaking in a conversation with Defense One

reporter Caitlin Kennedy during the March 16 Defense One State of the Marine Corps webcast. “To us, the Flight II is exactly what we need to replace the LSD.”

The Flight II LPD is designed to replace the old Whidbey Island-class dock landing ships (LSDs). With the Navy’s 2023 budget, the Navy had planned to retire four LSDs, but Congress refused to consent and prohibited the Navy from decommissioning them. In the 2024 budget proposal, the Navy is requesting to retire three of the LSDs.

However, the Navy is planning to gap procurement of the Flight II ships for at least five years in the 2024 Future Years Defense Plan while it evaluates the requirements of the Navy and Marine Corps and the construction costs of the ships.

“The decommissioning of the older ones [LSDs] and a strategic pause [in LPD Flight II procurement] causes a dilemma,” Berger said.

The Navy in 2014 decided to use the Flight I LPD hull as the basis for the Flight II design as a cost-saving measure. Berger said the cost of as Flight II ship was $1.62 billion, compared to $2 billion for a Flight I ship.

The commandant also said that the number large and medium amphibious warships needed was nothing less than 31, noting that if the number drops below 31, the nation will lack the Marine presence to respond to crises. He pointed to lack of an amphibious ready group and associated Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Mediterranean Sea to respond to the need disaster relief following the recent earthquake in Türkiye.

“If the net number of amphibious ships starts to drop … and you don’t have the amphibious ships that you need – we have the Marines, the Navy has the Sailors – the limiting factor here is the number of ships,” he said. “If that happens, you can’t respond in the timeline, you can’t respond when the need is urgent. This is the underpinning of our national strategy …

the ability to support allies and partners and deter something from happening. You need to be forward to do that."

Berger also re-iterated his support for Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Gilday's number one priority of readiness. The commandant said the funds for ship maintenance the Navy proposed in the 2024 budget, "were absolutely a step in the right direction."

Austal USA Awards Contract to Fairbanks Morse Defense for Cross Company Portfolio of OPC WMSM-919 Equipment

Release from Austal USA

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Marine defense contractor leverages resources from the

company's multiple brands to reinforce position as a single-source supplier

BELOIT, Wis. – March 16, 2023 – Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD), a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management (Arcline), has been awarded a contract by Austal USA for a portfolio of equipment to support the construction of WMSM-919, the U.S. Coast Guard's next Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC). The portfolio includes systems from the company's multiple brands, reinforcing FMD's position as a single-source defense contractor capable of providing fully integrated solutions for maritime defense.

"Receiving this contract from Austal encapsulates what we've been working toward in recent years through the acquisition of several strategic maritime suppliers," said FMD CEO George Whittier. "The industry recognizes the tremendous added value we can bring through our ability to provide projects with a comprehensive equipment portfolio that spans all of our brands. We look forward to working with Austal on this program and further demonstrating our wide range of capabilities."

Four of FMD's recently acquired companies will be involved in this contract. The cross-company package for WMSM-919 includes the following:

- Main Propulsion Diesel Engines (2) through Fairbanks Morse Defense

- Hangar Door (1) through Federal Equipment Company (FEC)
- Stores Elevator (1) through Federal Equipment Company (FEC)
- Reverse Osmosis System (1) through Maxim Watermakers
- All-Electric Davits (2) through Welin Lambie
- Various Electrical Components (cable trays, light supports, piping supports, down commers, stuffing tubes, etc.) through Research, Tool & Die (RT&D)

In July 2022, Austal USA was awarded a contract from the Coast Guard for detail design and material acquisition for the fifth OPC hull, with an option for up to 11 hulls.

FMD was previously contracted to provide the main propulsion engines for the Argus (WMSM-915), Chase (WMSM-916), Ingham (WMSM-9170, and Rush (WMSM-918). Earlier this year, the Coast Guard awarded FMD a contract for opposed-piston engine parts for its Bay Class icebreaking tugboats.

For more than 100 years, FMD has provided products and services to the Coast Guard and Navy. Today, the defense contractor powers over 65% of the Coast Guard's ships with medium-speed applications and supplies davits to 4 different classes of Coast Guard vessels.

The defense contractor has rapidly expanded its array of best-in-class marine technologies, OEM parts and turnkey services for marine defense customers through expansion and acquisitions of companies that include Federal Equipment Company (FEC), Hunt Valve, Maxim Watermakers, Research Tool & Die (RT&D), Ward Leonard, and Welin Lambie. FMD is unlocking the future of maritime technology through its recently launched Center of Technology Excellence.

About Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD)

Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD) builds, maintains, and services the most trusted naval power and propulsion systems on the planet. For more than 100 years, FMD has been a principal supplier of a growing array of leading marine technologies, OEM parts, and turnkey services to the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, Military Sealift Command, and Canadian Coast Guard. FMD stands ready to rapidly support the systems that power military fleets without compromising safety or quality. In times of peace and war, the experienced engineers, sailors, and technicians of FMD demonstrate our commitment to supporting the mission and vision of critical global naval

operations wherever and whenever needed. FMD is a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star completes Operation Deep Freeze 2023 mission, departs Antarctica

Release from U.S. Coast Guard

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March 15, 2023

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) and crew departed the Antarctic region March 2, after 67 days below the Antarctic Circle in support of Operation Deep Freeze 2023.

The Polar Star and crew broke a 17-mile channel through fast ice and conducted over 1,600 hours of ice breaking operations to create a navigable route for cargo vessels to reach McMurdo Station. The Polar Star and crew executed more than 60 hours of ice escorts for cargo vessels through difficult pack ice conditions.

“Though sea ice around the Antarctic continent overall has been determined to be at one of the lowest in recent history, the sea ice in McMurdo Sound was observed to be at the highest concentration on record dating back to at least 2012,” said Lt. Cmdr. Don Rudnickas, the onboard ice analyst. “The pack ice conditions this year were difficult and made icebreaker support critical not only for establishing the fast ice channel, but for the close escort through pack ice of three of the four cargo vessels resupplying McMurdo Station.”

While operating in Antarctica, the Polar Star and crew made two logistical stops at McMurdo Station. After the first stop in McMurdo, the cutter and crew assisted in moving a 30,000-ton aging and degraded ice pier from Winter Quarters Bay to make way for a modular causeway system that was installed for the season. The cutter also provided an ice escort to motor vessel Ocean Giant and crew, who delivered the 65-ton MCS that was offloaded, assembled, and used as a pier to replace the traditional ice pier used for cargo operations.

“The Antarctic region is a harsh and challenging environment to operate in,” said Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin Litts, operations officer. “Despite the inhospitable conditions, our crew adapted and tirelessly performed at the highest level to ensure mission success.”

Before departing the Antarctic Region, the cutter also visited Palmer Station, the United States' research facility located on the Antarctic Peninsula. Polar Star personnel went ashore to meet with the station manager and staff, tour the facility, and shared camaraderie in one of the most remote regions on the planet. This was the first visit from a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker to Palmer Station since 1987.

"Ice breaking in Antarctica is a unique and dynamic mission requiring months of preparation and coordination among all our partners," said Capt. Keith Ropella, commanding officer. "Mission success was a result of our crew working with fellow service members from the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy as a Joint Task Force to continue our proud support of the United States Antarctic Program."

Operation Deep Freeze is the annual logistical support mission provided by the Department of Defense to the National Science Foundation (NSF) managed by the U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP). This includes coordination of strategic inter-theater airlift, tactical intra-theater airlift and airdrop, aeromedical evacuation support, search and rescue response, sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply, port cargo handling, and transportation requirements supporting the NSF. This is a unique mission demonstrating U.S. commitment to the Antarctic Treaty and to research programs conducted for the betterment of all humanity. The Polar Star and crew contribute to this yearly effort through icebreaking to clear the channel for supply vessels.

The Polar Star is the United States' only asset capable of providing access to both Polar Regions. It is a 399-foot heavy polar icebreaker commissioned in 1976, weighing 13,500 tons and is 84-feet wide with a 34-foot draft. The six diesel and three gas turbine engines produce up to 75,000 horsepower.

Flag Officer Announcement

Release from the Department of Defense

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Flag Officer Announcement

MARCH 15, 2023

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president made the following nominations:

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Kenneth R. Blackmon for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Blackmon is currently serving as reserve director for maritime operations, United States Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Marc S. Lederer for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Lederer is currently serving as reserve deputy for fleet readiness and logistics, N4R, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Robert C. Nowakowski for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Nowakowski is currently serving as reserve vice commander, United States Naval Forces, United States Central Command, Fifth Fleet, Manama, Bahrain.

Navy Capt. John E. Byington for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Byington is currently serving as deputy chief of staff for strategic plans and policy, Naval Information Force Reserve Region Southeast, Jacksonville, Florida.

Navy Capt. Jeffrey J. Jurgemeyer for appointment to the grade

of rear admiral (lower half). Jurgemeyer is currently serving as chief of staff, United States Surface Force Pacific, San Diego, California.

Navy Capt. Richard S. Lofgren for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Lofgren is currently serving as commanding officer, Naval Reserve, Fourth Fleet/United States Naval Forces Southern Command, Mayport, Florida.

Navy Capt. David E. Ludwa for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Ludwa is currently serving as executive officer, Naval Reserve, United States Pacific Fleet Logistics Readiness Center, San Diego, California.

Navy Capt. Michael S. Mattis for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Mattis is currently serving as deputy commander, Navy Reserve Region Readiness and Mobilization Command, San Diego, California.

Navy Capt. Richard W. Meyer for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Meyer is currently serving as deputy commander, Navy Region Southeast Reserve Component Command, Fort Worth, Texas.

Navy Capt. Peter K. Muschinske for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Muschinske is currently serving as deputy fleet chaplain, Navy Reserve, United States Pacific Fleet, Maritime Headquarters, Detachment One Zero One, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Navy Capt. John A. Robinson III for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Robinson is currently serving as chief of staff, Navy Office of Information, Washington, D.C.

Navy Capt. Bryon T. Smith for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Smith is currently serving as commanding officer, Navy Reserve, Navy Installations Command Emergency Operations Center, Washington, D.C.

Navy Capt. Michael R. Vanpoots for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Vanpoots is currently serving as deputy commander, Navy Reserve Region Readiness and Mobilization Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Capt. Marc F. Williams for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Williams is currently serving as regimental commander, Naval Construction Group One, Port Hueneme, California.

Wittman Statement on AUKUS Announcement

March 13, 2023

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Wittman Statement on AUKUS Announcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01), Vice Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, released the following statement in response to today's conference on the path forward for AUKUS:

"First, I commend our three countries for their focus on continuing to realize the promise of AUKUS. At its core, the security framework is an agreement between the United States and the incredibly close friends and allies we find in Australia and the United Kingdom to enhance and advance our shared security priorities in the Indo-Pacific. We must never lose sight of that. AUKUS is far from a zero-sum game, and the success of the framework is critical to deepening our relationship with our allies, expanding our industrial base, and building a more stable Indo-Pacific region. China is watching our actions in the Indo-Pacific very closely—Beijing's own military ambitions grow by the day. AUKUS at its inception and today reflects a landmark moment for our countries to demonstrate resolve, alignment, and commitment to peace and strength in this era of Great Power Competition.

"I believe that done properly, AUKUS will be a win-win and serve as a critical opportunity to fully leverage our shared resources and grow our industrial base to support both US and Australian submarine construction. As I have consistently said, US support of Australia in their submarine construction cannot be at the expense of the US imperative to build at least 2 Virginia-class submarines per year and ultimately field 66 attack submarines in the US fleet. AUKUS will not realize its full potential if the overall number of submarines crewed by AUKUS members in the Pacific does not increase above current shipbuilding plans over the next decade—our shared strategic environment demands nothing less.

We must, and will, continue to invest in our combined industrial bases in order to reach the full potential of AUKUS.”

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the 1st District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee, where he serves as the Vice Chairman of the full committee and as the Chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee.