HII Awarded $2.4 Billion to Build Amphibious Assault Ship LHA 9

The amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) sails with the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during a photo exercise in the Philippine Sea, Sept. 17, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Christopher Lape*

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division has been awarded a $2.4 billion U.S. Navy fixed-price-incentive contract for the detail design and construction of amphibious assault ship LHA 9. The award includes options, that if exercised, would bring the cumulative value of the contract to $3.2 billion. Ingalls was awarded the original long-lead-time material contract for the fourth ship in the America (LHA 6) class on April 30, 2020.

"Ingalls shipbuilders are ready to build the Navy's newest LHA," said Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson. "We understand how important this work is, and consider it an honor to be given the opportunity to deliver this capability

to the fleet. We value our partnership with the Navy and all of our critical supplier partners.”

Construction on LHA 9 is scheduled to begin in December 2022.

Ingalls has a long tradition of building large-deck amphibious ships that are operated by the Navy and Marine Corps. The shipyard has delivered 15 large-decks, including the *Tarawa*-class, LHA 1-5; the *Wasp*-class, LHD 1-8; and most recently the America-class, LHA 6 and LHA 7. The third of the *America*-class, Bougainville (LHA 8), is currently under construction.

The America-class is a multi-functional and versatile ship that is capable of operating in a high density, multi-threat environment as an integral member of an expeditionary strike group, an amphibious task force or an amphibious ready group. LHA 9, like Bougainville, will retain the aviation capability of the America-class design while adding the surface assault capability of a well deck and a larger flight deck configured for F-35B Joint Strike Fighter and MV-22 Osprey aircraft. These large-deck amphibious assault ships also include top-of-the-line medical facilities with full operating suites and triage.

USNS COMFORT Commences Operation Continuing Promise 2022

The hospital ship USNS Comfort departs Naval Station Norfolk for the 2-month Continuing Promise 2022 medical mission to Latin America and the Caribbean. *U.S. NAVY*

MIAMI – Hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) departed from Miami after commencing Operation Continuing Promise 2022, Oct. 23, 2022, said Petty Officer 2nd Class Juel Foster of U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs said in an Oct. 22 release.

During Comfort's time in Miami, the ship hosted over 200 guests, including distinguished visitors from more than 15 countries and local and national media outlets. Sailors and crewmembers held tours of the ship and participated in press conferences and interviews. To cap it off, the U.S. Fleet Forces Band performed the "Sunday Night Football" theme song for NBC Sports, which aired Sunday afternoon. Among the distinguished visitors were General Laura J. Richardson, U.S. Southern Command combatant commander, and Rear Adm. Doug Sasse, reserve vice commander, U.S. Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet.

"Comfort and its supporting partners demonstrate a continued commitment to the Caribbean, Central and South America," said Richardson. "The multinational public, private and

multiservice team working on this 1,000-man hospital ship really demonstrates the power of partnership. It also demonstrates a profound truth that health security is national security."

Since its inauguration in 2007, Continuing Promise's mission has been to utilize trained medical teams to provide care aboard the ship and at land-based medical sites, while working with partner nation medical personnel to increase medical readiness, strengthen partnerships and enhance U.S. Navy and partner nation capabilities to respond to public health disasters and humanitarian crises.

"Continuing Promise 2022 reflects America's commitment to strengthening friendships, partnerships and solidarity with our Caribbean, Central and South American neighbors," said Capt. Bryan Carmichael, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 4. "Medical services are a big part of this mission, but we are also building relationships that will have lasting impacts."

USNS Comfort's current mission will be the 12th Continuing Promise mission conducted in U.S. Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet area of responsibility.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

Navy to Merge Mine-Countermeasures Helicopter Squadrons

An MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopter from Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron (HM) 12 participates in a nine-aircraft formation flight alongside HM-14 and HM-15. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jesse Schwab*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy plans to deactivate one of its two fleet helicopter mine countermeasures squadrons next year and combine many of its personnel and helicopters with the remaining squadron.

Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 14 (HM-14), which operates the MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopter from Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, is scheduled for de-activation effective July 31, 2023, according to a Navy directive.

HM-14's sister squadron, HM-15, also based in Norfolk, will

absorb 102 full-time and 48 reserve enlisted personnel and four full-time and eight reserve officers from HM-14 in order to retain “as much airborne mine countermeasure capability as possible,” the directive said.

The directive used the term “HM-15 MAX” to describe the enlarged squadron.

HM-14 and HM-15 are considered combined Active-Reserve squadrons, with an 80/20 mix of personnel from the two components.

HM-14 maintains a detachment in Pohang, South Korea, in support of the U.S. 7th Fleet, while HM-15 maintains a detachment in Manama, Bahrain in support of the U.S. 5th Fleet.

Another squadron, HM-12, serves as a fleet replacement squadron for the MH-53E fleet.

The Sikorsky-built MH-53E Sea Dragon has two primary missions: airborne mine countermeasures and Navy heavy lift and vertical onboard delivery. The aircraft is a derivative of the CH-53E Super Stallion but is heavier and has a greater fuel capacity and range. Capable of transporting up to 55 troops, the MH-53E can carry a 16-ton payload 50 nautical miles or a 10-ton payload 300 nautical miles. In its primary mission, the MH-53E can tow a variety of mine countermeasures systems, including the Mk105 magnetic minesweeping sled, the AQS-24A side-scan sonar and the Mk103 mechanical minesweeping system. Mission duration can exceed four hours.

The Navy plans to keep the MH-53E in service at least until 2025.

Bahrain Leads Unmanned Exercise for Multinational Task Force

A U.S. Navy Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel operates with patrol coastal ships USS Hurricane (PC 3) and USS Chinook (PC 9) from the United States, UK Royal Navy ships RFA Cardigan Bay (L3009) and HMS Bangor (M109), Royal Bahrain Naval Force ships RBNS Al-Manama and RBNS Al-Fateh, and HMS Khalid from the Royal Saudi Navy in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 26. *U.S. ARMY / Spc. Noah Martin*

MANAMA, Bahrain – A multinational naval task force led by Bahrain conducted a one-day training drill in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 26, featuring the use of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence alongside seven crewed ships, Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs said in an Oct. 27 release.

Naval forces from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States participated in support of Bahrain-led

Combined Task Force (CTF) 152, one of four task forces organized under the Combined Maritime Forces. The naval drill enhanced interoperability in integrating new unmanned technologies to monitor regional waters.

“It is so valuable to get these opportunities to really test how our forces from across different nations can work together with the uncrewed systems,” said Royal Bahrain Naval Force Capt. Rashed Al-Ameen, commander of CTF 152. “It helps us better understand how to work with each other to boost regional security.”

Three U.S. Navy Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessels operated with USS Hurricane (PC 3) and USS Chinook (PC 9) from the United States, UK Royal Navy ships RFA Cardigan Bay (L3009) and HMS Bangor (M109), Royal Bahrain Naval Force ships RBNS Al-Manama and RBNS Al-Fateh and HMS Khalid from the Royal Saudi Navy.

CTF 152 led the exercise while embarked aboard Cardigan Bay, as the ship sailed in international waters off the coast of Saudi Arabia. This is the latest drill involving unmanned systems in the Arabian Gulf since the United Kingdom and United States completed a similar bilateral naval exercise Oct. 7.

During both maneuvers, unmanned and artificial intelligence systems operated in conjunction with crewed ships and naval command centers ashore in Bahrain. Sensors from the unmanned vessels were able to locate and identify training aides in the water and relay visual depictions to the command centers.

Established in 2004, CTF 152 oversees maritime security operations in the Arabian Gulf for Combined Maritime Forces. Bahrain assumed command of CTF 152 from Kuwait in August.

Combined Maritime Forces is the world’s largest multinational naval partnership and includes 34 member-nations whose forces operate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea,

Gulf of Oman, Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean. CMF is headquartered in Bahrain with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet.

Navy and Army Conduct Second Hypersonics Flight Campaign

The Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001) sails in formation during Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aleksandr Freutel*

WASHINGTON – The Navy Strategic Systems Programs (SSP) and the Army Hypersonic Project Office (AHPO) successfully conducted the second High Operational Tempo for Hypersonics flight campaign on Oct. 26 at 2:30pm EST, the U.S. Navy Strategic Systems Programs Office public affair office said in a

release.

This flight campaign was executed by Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Wallops Flight Facility. This test will be used to inform the development of the Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) and the Army's Long Range Hypersonic Weapon offensive hypersonic strike capability. The CPS and AHPO programs are on track to support the first fielding of a hypersonic capability to the Army in fiscal 2023. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) took part in the campaign to gather data for its work developing systems that will defend against hypersonic weapons.

One precision sounding rocket launch was conducted containing hypersonic experiments from partners, including CPS, MDA, AHPO, the Joint Hypersonic Transition Office, SNL, Johns Hopkins University/Applied Physics Laboratory, MITRE, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and several defense contractors. A second sounding rocket will be launched this week to complete the campaign. These rockets contained experimental payloads that provided data on the performance of materials and systems in a realistic hypersonic environment.

During weapon system development, precision sounding rocket launches fill a critical gap between ground testing and full system flight testing. These launches allow for frequent and regular flight testing opportunities to support rapid maturation of offensive and defensive hypersonic technologies. The data collected from the latest sounding rocket campaign will drive warfighting capability improvements for both Navy and Army to ensure continued battlefield dominance.

The CPS Program, the lead for the common hypersonic missile design and development, has implemented a weapon system development plan that includes a series of recurring Technology Insertion points that will ensure the United States offensive hypersonic capability continues to evolve and

enhance beyond the initial capabilities fielded to the first Army Battery. The Technology Insertion process will allow for the routine incorporation of new capabilities and system improvements, as they become available, in order to rapidly maximize the warfighting capability delivered to our Soldiers and Sailors. The frequency and affordability of the sounding rocket launches allows for the Navy and Army Programs to mature these technologies prior to finalizing the weapon system design. For example, the October 2021 inaugural High Operational Tempo for Hypersonics flight campaign demonstrated a capability that was deemed sufficiently mature to pursue its incorporation in the next Technology Insertion.

This test is a vital step in the development of a Navy-designed common hypersonic missile, consisting of a Common Hypersonic Glide Body and booster, which will be fielded by both the Navy and Army with individual weapon systems and launchers tailored for launch from sea or land. The Navy and Army will continue to work in close collaboration to leverage joint testing opportunities.

Delivering hypersonic weapons is one of the DoD’s highest priorities. Hypersonic weapons, capable of flying at speeds greater than five times the speed of sound (Mach 5), are highly maneuverable and operate at varying altitudes. The DoD is working in collaboration with industry, government national laboratories, and academia to field hypersonic warfighting capability in the early-to mid-2020s.

The Army and Navy routinely share data with MDA that supports its work on hypersonic defenses.

Marine Corps Releases ‘Shifting Threats’ Recruiting Advertising Campaign

The U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Command released its new advertising campaign on YouTube, Oct. 27.

QUANTICO, Virginia – Marine Corps Recruiting Command will release its new advertising campaign, *Shifting Threats*, via YouTube on Oct. 27. The commercial is scheduled for its television debut, Saturday, Oct. 29, during the Georgia versus Florida college football game.

This new advertising campaign conveys a single premise: against ever-evolving threats, our nation’s greatest asset is the adaptable skillset of Marines who fight and win.

Shifting Threats showcases the increasingly complex and chaotic global environment that Marines are currently operating in, characterized by “un” threats: unpredictable, unimaginable, unknown and undeclared.

“The centerpiece of the Marine Corps isn’t a platform; it’s the individual Marine,” said Lt. Col. Rob Dolan, Director, Marketing and Communication, MCRC. “The concept behind the *Shifting Threats* campaign is to explain who we are and what we do for the nation while communicating the Marine Corps’ identity to this generation of prospective Marines.”

On Oct. 27, the *Shifting Threats* commercial can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/user/OurMarines

Shifting Threats will be amplified through a variety of communication and media platforms to include compelling communication pieces, such as TV/video advertisement (linear and online), digital audio, social media posts and digital assets.

Coast Guard Establishes New Base in Oregon

Cmdr. Todd Wimmer, the commanding officer of Base Astoria, shakes hands with Rear Adm. Jon Hickey, the Director of Operational Logistics, during an establishment ceremony in Warrenton, Oregon, to formally establish Coast Guard Base Astoria Oct. 26, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 1st Class Travis Magee*

ASTORIA, Ore. – The U.S. Coast Guard held an establishment ceremony Oct. 26 in Warrenton, Oregon, to formally establish Coast Guard Base Astoria.

During the ceremony, Cmdr. Todd Wimmer assumed command of the new unit.

Rear Adm. Jon Hickey, the director of Operational Logistics,

presided over the ceremony.

Wimmer previously served as chief of facilities at Coast Guard Training Center Petaluma, California, from 2019-2022.

Base Astoria is located in Warrenton and will provide operational logistics support for Coast Guard units across the Thirteenth Coast Guard District's Oregon and southern Washington regions.

Navy to Consolidate Fire Scout UAVs on West Coast

Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class Nathan Thomas and Aviation Electrician's Mate 2nd Class Tristan Persky, assigned to the "Sea Knights" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC)

22, Detachment 5, prepare an MQ-8C Fire Scout for takeoff on the flight deck of the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) Jan. 29, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Danielle Baker*
ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy plans to consolidate operations of its Fire Scout unmanned helicopters to the West Coast in 2023, a Navy spokesman said.

The MQ-8 Fire Scouts have been by detachments of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 22 (HSC-22) on the East Coast and by HSC-21 and HSC-23 on the West Coast. The squadrons operated Fire Scouts alongside their MH-60S Seahawk helicopters.

"The Navy plans to pivot all MQ-8 operations to the West Coast in [fiscal 2023] with HSC-21 transitioning from the MQ-8B to the more capable MQ-8C. HSC-23 already operates the MQ-8C," said Cmdr. Zach Harrell, spokesperson for Commander, Naval Air Forces, in an email to Seapower.

According to a Sept. 27 Navy directive, the East Coast squadron, HSC-22, will be de-activated effective June 30, 2023.

"Currently, there are no plans to expand Fire Scout operations to other helicopter sea combat (HSC) squadrons," Harrell said.

Coast Guard Delivers Upgraded MH-65 Helicopters to Air Station Atlantic City

Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City received its first upgraded MH-65E Dolphin helicopter Oct. 25. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City received its first upgraded MH-65E Dolphin helicopter Oct. 25 to replace the legacy MH-65D helicopters that serve out of the Coast Guard's largest MH-65 helicopter unit.

The avionics upgrade to the Echo or "E" configuration will provide enhanced search and rescue capabilities including modern "glass cockpit" technology that increases pilot and aircrew situational awareness.

The Dolphin upgrades also include reliability and capability improvements for the automatic flight control system, enhanced digital weather and surface radar and multifunctional displays with more accurate fuel calculations.

The upgrades comply with the Federal Aviation Administration's Next Generation Airspace Transportation System requirements, and extends the aircraft service life to the late 2030s.

The transition of Air Station Atlantic City's 12 MH-65D helicopters to the upgraded "E" configuration is expected to take approximately 10 months.

During the upgrade period, the unit’s 62 pilots and 104 aircrew members will undergo a three-week transition course at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. Aircrew and mechanics will undergo formal training specific to their roles and duties during this course.

“The upgrades and advanced training will enhance the situational awareness of our aircrews and improve mission planning capabilities aboard the Coast Guard’s most prolific rotary-wing asset,” said Cmdr. Christian Polyak, engineering officer at Air Station Atlantic City. “The replacement and inspection of key aircraft components as a part of the upgrade are also expected to extend the aircraft’s service-life and enable us to continue safeguarding and securing our coasts for years to come.”

Air Station Atlantic City Dolphin helicopter crews perform search and rescue, provide aids to navigation support and maritime law enforcement and marine environmental protection to the mid-Atlantic region from Long Island, New York, to the Maryland and Virginia border.

Air Station Atlantic City helicopters and aircrews also provide continuous support for the North American Aerospace Defense Command’s airspace security mission in Washington, D.C., and throughout the country as necessary.

Additionally, the upgrades also include advanced navigation capabilities that will allow pilots to safely maneuver through highly congested, complex air traffic that can be encountered in situations such as disaster response.

The Coast Guard plans to convert all 98 of its Dolphin helicopters to the MH-65E configuration by the end of 2024.

CSG-4 Exercise Enhances Gerald R. Ford Inaugural Deployment with NATO Allies

The first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) transits the Atlantic Ocean, Oct. 20, 2022. The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) is deployed in the Atlantic Ocean, conducting training and operations alongside NATO Allies and partners. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jackson Adkins*

NORFOLK, Va. – The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and ships from three North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries completed a three-week exercise orchestrated by Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 4 called Task Force Exercise (TFEX) 23-2 from Oct. 5-23, Carrier Strike Group Four (CSG-4)Public Affairs said in an Oct. 24 release.

During TFEX 23-2, USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) and James E. Williams (DDG 95) joined exercise events to prepare for independent-

duty deployments later this year. USS Bainbridge (DDG 96) and USS Mason (DDG 87) supported CSG-4 throughout the exercise by augmenting several training scenarios.

The exercise occurred concurrently with the beginning of Ford Strike Group's inaugural deployment.

Rear Adm. Jeffrey "Caesar" Czerewko, commander, CSG-4, reiterated the significance of the training exercise, especially the unique interoperability opportunities alongside the Ford Strike Group and allies.

"Carrier Strike Group 4 develops scenarios in an agile and informed manner to best prepare our warfighters for anything they may encounter while deployed at-sea," said Czerewko. "The Task Force Exercise with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and coalition partners provided an unmatched opportunity to integrate together in the Atlantic. The scenarios offered all participants a building block approach to planning and executing missions culminating in successful demonstrations of lethal performance in a high-end fight."

The three participating countries outside the United States were Canada, Germany and Spain. Their ships included: ESPS Alvaro De Bazan (F 101), HMCS Fredericton (FFH 337), and FGS Hessen (F 221).

The scenarios offered during the exercise included dynamic maneuvers, simulated strait transits, flight operations, weapons systems testing, communication drills, and cyber response.

"All entities within Carrier Strike Group 12 benefited tremendously from this CSG-4-led exercise," said Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander, CSG-12. "As the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group continues on its first deployment, the relationships built and capabilities refined with our NATO

partners will continue to enhance our flexibility while operating forward.”

The Ford Strike Group includes: Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), USS Normandy (CG 60), USS Ramage (DDG 61), USS McFaul (DDG 74), and USS Thomas Hudner (DD 116).

CSG-4 is a team that consists of experienced Sailors, Marines, government civilians and reservists, who mentor, train and assess U.S. 2nd Fleet combat forces to forward-deploy in support and defense of national interests. CSG-4’s experts shape the readiness of U.S. 2nd Fleet Carrier Strike Groups (CSG), Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESG), Amphibious Readiness Groups (ARG) and independent deploying ships through live, at-sea and synthetic training, as well as academic instruction. Along with its subordinate commands, Tactical Training Group Atlantic (TTGL) and Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Atlantic (EWTGL), CSG-4 prepares every Atlantic-based CSG, ARG and independent deployer for sustained forward-deployed high-tempo operations.