Ameresco, Bright Canyon Energy Host Groundbreaking Ceremony for Kūpono Solar at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam

FRAMINGHAM, Mass., PHOENIX, Ariz. and HONOLULU, Hawaii – Ameresco, Inc., a leading clean technology integrator specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy, and Bright Canyon Energy, a leading developer of energy infrastructure, hosted a groundbreaking and blessing ceremony for the Kūpono Solar Project on Friday, October 7, 2022, Ameresco said in a release.

This combined solar and battery storage system will be built at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam West Loch Annex in Hawai‘i. Once operational, the project is designed to deliver 42 megawatts (MW) of clean, renewable energy to Hawaiian Electric’s (HECO) grid on the island of O‘ahu. Attendees at the event heard from U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, Lt. Governor Josh Green, and Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment.

Using approximately 131 acres of Federal land, the Kūpono Solar Project will feature the installation of a 42-MW photovoltaic solar array and 42 MW/168 MWh (four-hour duration) of lithium-ion battery storage system. The batteries are designed to store solar energy beyond sunset hours, enabling the project to deliver sustainable, renewable energy to power approximately 10,000 homes on O‘ahu. Additionally, once fully operational, the project is expected to reduce more than 50,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually from Hawai‘i’s environment, which is the equivalent to offsetting emissions

from 12,000 cars annually.

“Today, we are taking significant strides to strengthen our state’s energy security and resilience, and thanks to the ‘Ewa community, Navy, Hawaiian Electric, Ameresco and Bright Canyon Energy, we are now steps closer to reaching Hawai‘i’s renewable energy vision of achieving 100% clean energy by 2045,” said Lt. Governor Josh Green. “Kūpono Solar is a landmark initiative for us that will not only benefit our state’s economy but will also bolster our sustainability efforts and local communities through stable, affordable energy, innovative technology and job creation.”

Ameresco and Bright Canyon Energy established a joint venture in 2021 known as Kūpono Solar Development Company, LLC to advance the Kūpono Solar Project, which is the first project of the joint venture. In support of the Department of Defense’s long-term energy security initiative to increase clean energy reliability and military capabilities, and the state’s goals of renewable energy and decarbonization, Kūpono Solar has a 37-year land lease agreement with the Navy to provide critical energy resiliency upgrades for O’ahu.

“The Department of the Navy is proud to partner with the Kūpono Solar team and Hawaiian Electric as we enhance mission and community resilience and move purposefully towards Hawaii and Navy’s energy goals,” said Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment. “This is a great example of climate action, building access to clean, reliable energy sources inside and outside the fenceline.”

Kūpono Solar will own and operate this solar and battery project under a 20-year power purchase agreement with Hawaiian Electric. The project will benefit the state’s long-term clean energy transition plan while setting the foundation for Ameresco and Bright Canyon Energy to bring a diversified portfolio of clean energy solutions to Hawai‘i in the future.

“The start of this project comes at a time when the need for consistent energy security and independence is at an all-time high,” said Nicole Bulgarino, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Federal Solutions, Ameresco. “The solar and battery storage solutions that are being implemented will deliver clean, renewable energy to the grid and benefit businesses and residents across Hawai‘i.”

“Through our strategic relationships with the Navy, Hawaiian Electric and the community, we are able to leverage clean technology and infrastructure upgrades to help the state of Hawai‘i reach its renewable energy goals and the Navy achieve its climate and energy resiliency objectives,” said Jason Smith, General Manager, Bright Canyon Energy. “It’s energizing to work with a group of partners committed to bringing this key energy infrastructure to O‘ahu and its residents.”

Construction on the Kūpono Solar Project is expected to be completed in early 2024.

22nd MEU, Kearsarge ARG Return from Seven-Month Deployment

U.S. Navy Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Brandon Baker, assigned to Beach Master Unit (BMU) 2, directs a light armored vehicle, assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), off Landing Craft Air Cushion 83, assigned to Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 4, in Morehead City, North Carolina, Oct. 8, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John Bellino*

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – Sailors and Marines assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) returned home to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Oct. 9, 2022, after completing a seven-month deployment with the Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) in the U.S. Naval Sixth Fleet area of operations. The Kearsarge ARG is comprised of the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3), the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Arlington (LPD 24) and the Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44).

The deployment marked the first time an ARG/MEU maintained a six-month presence in the Baltic region in over 20 years. More than 4,000 Marines and Sailors supported a wide range of

interoperability training and exercises in 15 countries within U.S. Sixth Fleet; covering the High North/North Atlantic, Central Mediterranean, and Baltic regions promoting stability, increasing interoperability, sustaining combat readiness, and crisis response capabilities while strengthening relationships with both NATO Allies and partners.

“Our time in the Baltics and the High North was particularly valuable,” said Col. Paul C. Merida, commanding officer, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit. “I think all of us in the 22nd MEU came away extremely impressed with the level of military professionalism that our friends in the region possess and the level of enthusiasm for real, integrated defense cooperation was profound wherever we visited. I believe future east coast MEUs will find the High North and the Baltics not only a challenging training environment but a region full of very capable friends and allies.”

Exercises in the Arctic Region included Northern Viking 2022, a multinational amphibious and maritime exercise alongside Allied nations from France, Germany, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom; and a two-week bilateral exercise in northern Norway and the Norwegian Sea, exercising integrated cold weather and live- fire training with the Norwegian Armed Forces.

In the Central Mediterranean, Marines and Sailors assigned to USS Arlington participated in bilateral exercises such as Alexander the Great 22, a bilateral U.S.-Greece (Hellenic) amphibious training event; EFES 22, a biennial, multinational, combined, joint and live firing exercise with Turkish Armed Forces and U.S. Army’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and medical teams; as well as African Lion 22, an exercise enhancing the U.S. African Command’s partnership and security cooperation with the Tunisian Ministry of Defense.

While operating in the Baltic region, Kearsarge and Gunston Hall participated in an Estonian-led exercise, Hedgehog (Siil)

22 with Estonian Defense Forces and forces from Task Group 61/2.4 and the NATO-led exercise Neptune Shield. All of these exercises incorporated 18 NATO Allies and partners working together through multiple domains throughout the European continent and waters. In June, Kearsarge and Gunston Hall participated in the joint, annual multinational exercise, Baltic Operations (BALTOPS 22) designed to enhance interoperability, capability and demonstrate cohesion among Allied and partner forces in defending the Baltic Sea region.

Following BALTOPS22 and AL22, the Kearsarge ARG-MEU conducted scheduled maintenance availability periods in Brest, France, Rijeka, Croatia, and Copenhagen, Denmark throughout July 2022. The maintenance availability periods, which included mid-deployment voyage repair (MDVR) evolutions, allowed U.S. Navy ships to accomplish necessary and preventative repairs to continue their missions in the region while simultaneously strengthening relationships with host nations.

Once MDVRs were successfully completed, the Kearsarge ARG-MEU team returned to the Baltic region as a combined force to continue strengthening relationships and partnerships. Through rapid planning, coordination, and execution, the ARG-MEU team successfully completed bilateral training events with Finland, Sweden, and Standing NATO Maritime Group ONE (SNMG 1) during the months of August and September.

Upon conclusion of operations in the Baltic region, the ARG-MEU successfully completed a cumulative of 29 port visits across the ARG visiting 14 NATO Allied and partner countries including Reykjavik, Iceland; Narvik and Tromsø, Norway; Volos and Alexandropoulos, Greece; Tallinn, Estonia; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm and Visby, Sweden; Gabés, Tunisia; Kiel, Germany; Brest, France; Rijeka, Croatia; Copenhagen and Kalundborg, Denmark; Riga, Latvia; Klaipeda, Lithuania; and Gdańsk and Gdynia, Poland. During each visit, the ARG-MEU engaged with representatives from embassies, ministries of

defense, and local government, military and civilian officials to strengthen relationships with NATO Allies and partners through in-person key leader engagements and exchanges including media availabilities, ship tours, office calls, ceremonies and receptions, and community service projects.

“After a busy seven-month deployment it’s good to get the 22d MEU team back home to Lejeune,” Col. Paul Merida said. “We believe this was the first East Coast MEU deployment in a long while that was spent entirely in the 6th Fleet area of operations and the Marines did a tremendous job operating from above the Arctic Circle, to the Baltics, to the Mediterranean Sea. All of this was done with the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine War, which added an additional sense of importance to our work; much of which was done alongside our NATO Allies and other key regional partners. Our families and friends should be proud of the service their Marines rendered and I believe the 22nd MEU has represented II Marine Expeditionary Force and the U.S. Marine Corps accordingly.”

The 22nd MEU’s mission is to provide the United States with a forward-deployed, amphibious force-in-readiness capable of executing missions across the full spectrum of combat and military operations and consists of four elements – a command element, a ground combat element, Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/6, a logistics combat element, Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 26, and an aviation combat element, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 263 Reinforced.

The ARG-MEU’s presence overseas in U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations supported strategic interests and contributed to regional security and stability and reassured the United States commitment to the High North, Mediterranean, and Baltic regions. The blue-green team provided operational flexibility to combatant commanders by providing a versatile contingency response force using sea, air, land and logistical assets. The versatility inherent to the amphibious force allowed for flexible and mission-tailored forces, while representing our

nation’s strength, capability and resolve to partners and allies and deterring potential adversaries.

Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast Returns Home after 55-Day Counter-Drug Patrol

The Coast Guard Cutter Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) is moored while the cutter made a port call to Huatulco Mexico, Aug. 29, 2022. Steadfast returned to their Astoria homeport Oct. 3, 2022, following a 55-day counter narcotics patrol. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

ASTORIA, Ore. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) returned to their Astoria homeport Monday following a 55-day counter-narcotics patrol, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Oct. 9 release.

The crew aboard the 210-foot medium-endurance cutter steamed more than 11,000 miles conducting training, law enforcement,

search and rescue, and helicopter operations in international waters ranging from Oregon to Central America.

The Steadfast deployed with additional crew members from Maintenance Augmentation Team Seattle, Electronic Support Detachment Petaluma, and the soon-to-be-commissioned U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Argus (WMSM 915).

While en route to the cutter’s patrol area in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Steadfast’s crew hosted a helicopter operations proficiency event for multiple aircrews from Coast Guard Air Stations San Francisco, Barbers Point, Humboldt Bay, and North Bend. For three days, the crews conducted numerous flight operations including over 100 landings and various other operations. The resulting aviator qualifications across the four aviation units included one initial pilot qualification, and one upgrade to instructor pilot.

While in theater, Steadfast’s crew identified and located a high-speed, panga-style vessel suspected of smuggling contraband. After initially pursuing the vessel with the cutter’s over-the-horizon small boat, they handed off the case to a partner nation for intercept as the vessel neared partner nation territorial seas.

During the transit back to Astoria, Steadfast’s crew conducted flight operations with Air Station Humboldt Bay. Steadfast and the aircrew completed six night landings for pilot training and qualification. Flight operations were cut short when the aircrew was diverted for a search-and-rescue case involving a hiker stranded and in distress. Steadfast’s crew quickly adapted, refueled the helicopter on deck, and allowed the MH-65 to respond within minutes of receiving the call, demonstrating the versatility and adaptability of the cutter and crew to respond to any of the Coast Guard’s missions.

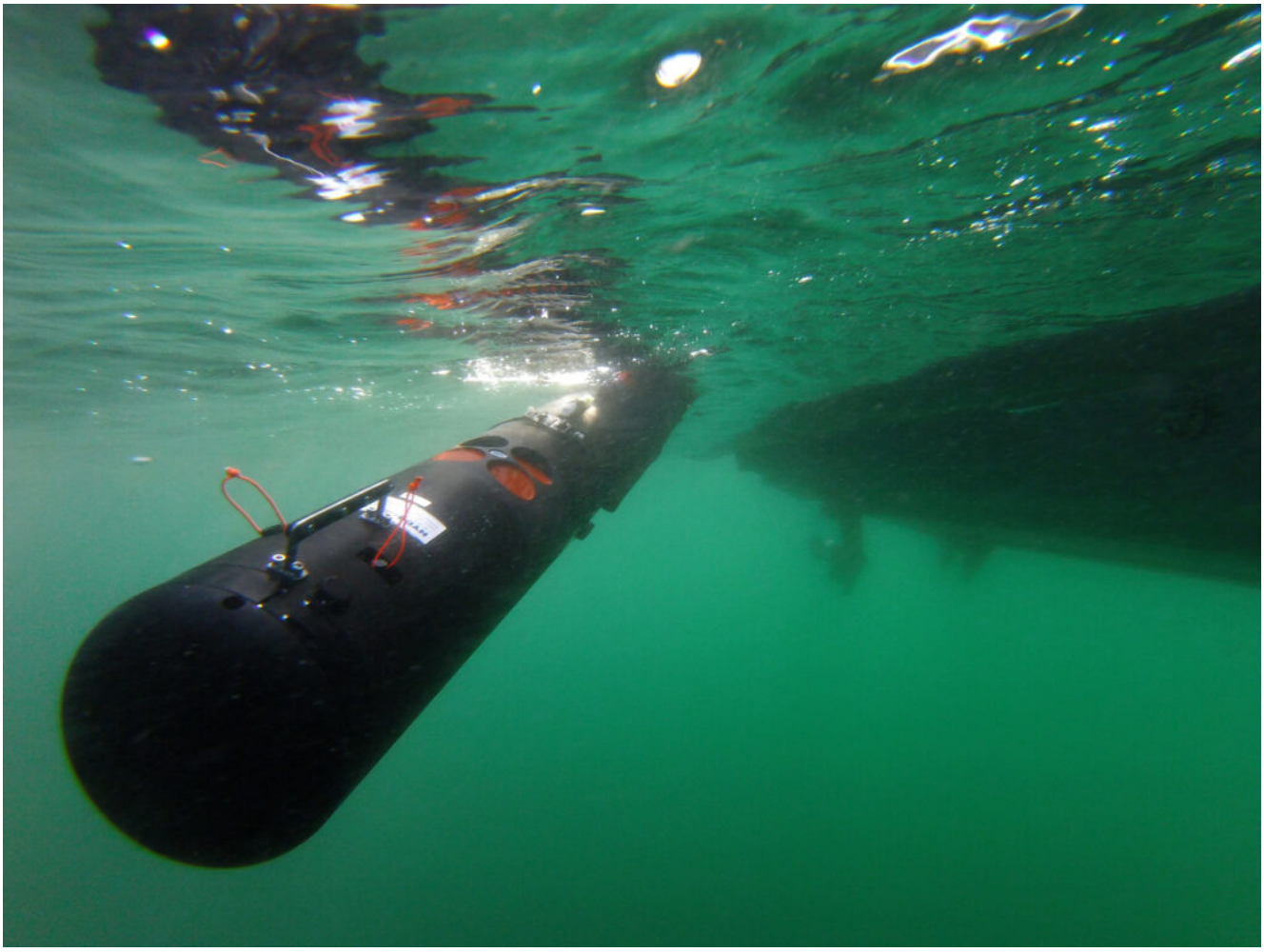
This was the first patrol aboard Steadfast for the new

commanding officer, Cmdr. Brock S. Eckel, who assumed command in July.

“This was a wildly productive deployment with noteworthy enhancements to crew qualifications and proficiency following a significant personnel turnover,” said Eckel. “I am overwhelmed by the camaraderie of the Steadfast crew and honored to join them for adventure on the high seas.”

Steadfast is a 54-year-old Reliance-class cutter that has been homeported in Astoria since 1994. Previously, Steadfast was homeported in St. Petersburg, Florida, where she earned the nickname “El Tiburon Blanco” (‘the White Shark’), from drug smugglers for her notoriety in counter-narcotics operations in the Florida Straits and the Caribbean Sea.

NATO Uses Unmanned Systems Exercises to Stay Ahead in Capability Development



A REMUS 100 unmanned underwater vehicle deploys after being launched by a Sailors during REP(MUS) in Portugal, 2019. REP(MUS) 2022 merged into NATO's Dynamic Messenger exercise in 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Travis Simmons*

TROIA, Portugal – NATO, the Portuguese Navy, industry and other stakeholders recently conducted back-to-back exercises designed to integrate unmanned capabilities into naval operations and assist the alliance and its member states in maintaining an operational edge.

The Portuguese Navy-hosted REP(MUS) exercise – the navy's Recognized Environmental Picture (REP) activity, amalgamated since 2019 with NATO's Maritime Unmanned Systems (MUS) initiative – took place across September's first three weeks. REP(MUS) merged into Dynamic Messenger, NATO Maritime Command's inaugural maritime unmanned systems exercise, which took place in September's final week. Both exercises occurred off Troia in southern Portugal.

The exercises aimed to drive forward NATO and member state integration of maritime unmanned systems into operational experimentation.

“These [exercises] are an accelerant to making sure we think ahead to stay ahead,” Vice Adm. Keith Blount, a UK Royal Navy officer and commander of Maritime Command, told a press briefing at Striking and Support Forces NATO headquarters in Lisbon.

“We’re setting commanders at sea real challenges in trying to adjust from a traditional command-and-control way of delivering warfighting capability to one that is very much at the technological edge, using equipment many of these commanders have probably not seen and operated with before,” Blount added. “That drives tactics, training, procedures, the education of officers … [and] the doctrine we follow.”

Regarding Dynamic Messenger, Blount said, “This has been quite a journey in the development and construction of this exercise, going back more than two years …. We build naturally on the success of REP(MUS), a well-established exercise, and now take it on to the next step – the integration of the capability into our [activities] at sea.”

For the journey’s next steps, Blount said, “One of the very first things that’s going to happen is we’re going to start planning next year’s Dynamic Messenger, building on the lessons from this year. We’re doing a lot of other work as well, to try and make operational experimentation more of a norm outside of exercises so we can have it as a free good to being out in the maritime commons, doing this without any detriment to the capability we are delivering day by day.”

Alongside MARCOM, Supreme Allied Command Transformation was the second NATO strategic-level headquarters involved in delivering Dynamic Messenger.

“SACT has particular roles around innovation and

experimentation within the alliance, so Dynamic Messenger provides an excellent opportunity for us to pursue both those areas," Royal Navy officer Vice Adm. Guy Robinson, SACT's chief of staff, told the briefing. "Working closely with [MARCOM], we can come together hopefully to get some really useful insights from which we can both develop capability within the alliance and help allies shape their own capability investments.

"We're always trying to look ahead and ensure we maintain that competitive edge, and to embrace those new technologies when the time is right for the alliance," Robinson said. "Exercises like this can help showcase opportunities for allies to see where they may want to invest in the future.

"The real advantage of an exercise like [Dynamic Messenger] is that … by bringing Admiral Blount's operational commanders into the picture, we then understand the real, practical application of these new technologies," Robinson said. Unmanned systems "may work well in an isolated environment. [However], when you put them with commanders who have to deploy them, recover them, and see whether they are now more effective and more efficient, that's when you get the real insight. That's when you get the data you need to really see how they can change the battlespace."

Navy Demonstrates VLS Reload in San Diego Harbor

Sailors aboard Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) guide training ordnance into the ship's forward vertical launch system (VLS) cells during a proof-of-concept evolution in San Diego, Oct. 4. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Taylor Crenshaw*

SAN DIEGO – The U.S. Navy is scheduled to demonstrate re-arming the vertical launch system aboard Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) at Naval Air Station North Island and in the San Diego Harbor from Oct. 4 – 7, Commander, U.S. Third Fleet Public Affairs said in an Oct. 6 release

This will be the first time the Navy has tested VLS reloading from an offshore support vessel platform, using Military Sealift Command fleet experimentation ship MV Ocean Valor.

The demonstration is being conducted to provide proof of concept that an offshore support vessel can reload the weapons system pierside and while the ship is at sea, with a goal of expanding the capability of VLS reloading in expeditionary environments.

The launch system re-load has been tested previously, in 2016 and 2019, using other Military Sealift Command platforms.

Spruance, named for Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, who commanded U.S. forces at the Battle of Midway, is homeported in San Diego. The ship returned to the Naval Base San Diego in August following a seven-month deployment with Carrier Strike Group 3 to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleets. Spruance was also one of 38 ships from 26 partner nations who took part in Exercise Rim of the Pacific 2022 in the Hawaiian Islands Operating Area from June to August.

Built in 2002, MV Ocean Valor is an MSC-contracted vessel that supports logistics experimentation for fuel, stores, passengers and ordnance delivery.

The demonstration will not include live ordnance and there is no danger posed to the residents of San Diego, the harbor or sea life.

Future USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee Completes Acceptance Trials

The future USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) completed Acceptance trials, Oct. 6. *HII*

WASHINGTON – The future USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) completed Acceptance trials, October 6, Team Ships Public Affairs said in a release.

During trials, the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey inspected the ship performing a series of demonstrations while pier side and underway to validate performance. The ship's onboard systems, including navigation, damage control, mechanical and electrical systems, combat systems, communications and propulsion applications, met or exceeded Navy specifications.

DDG 123 is named for the first ever woman to receive the Navy Cross, Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee. Higbee served in the Navy for 14 years, including 11 as superintendent of the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps. She joined the Navy Nurse Corps in October 1908 and was promoted to chief nurse less than a year later. She was named superintendent in January 1911.

"We are proud to introduce another advanced warship to the fleet," said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51 program manager,

Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. “The Navy is honored to recognized Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee with this fully capable, mission-ready ship.”

The DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class ships are multi-mission guided missile destroyers designed to operate offensively and defensively, independently, or as units of Carrier Strike Groups, Expeditionary Strike Groups, and Surface Action Groups in multi-threat environments that include air, surface and subsurface threats. These ships will respond to Low Intensity Conflict/Coastal and Littoral Offshore Warfare scenarios, as well as open ocean conflict, providing or augmenting power projection, forward presence requirements and escort operations at sea.

DDG 123 is a Flight IIA destroyer equipped with the Aegis Combat System Baseline 9C2. This system delivers quick reaction time, high firepower and increased electronic countermeasures capability against a variety of threats.

The ship is expected to be delivered to the Navy later this year from Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Ingalls Shipbuilding division in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The shipyard is also in production on future destroyers Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), Ted Stevens (DDG 128), Jeremiah Denton (DDG 129) and George M. McNeal (DDG 131).

U.S., U.K. Navies Conduct Unmanned Exercise in Arabian

Gulf

Naval forces from the United States and United Kingdom conducted a bilateral exercise in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 7. *U.S. NAVY*

MANAMA, Bahrain – Naval forces from the United States and United Kingdom conducted a bilateral exercise in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 7, which featured the use of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence to enhance maritime monitoring by crewed ships and operators ashore, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in an Oct. 7 release.

The one-day exercise, called Phantom Scope, occurred in international waters off the coast of Bahrain with forces from U.S. 5th Fleet and the UK Royal Navy. Three Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessels (USVs) participated alongside guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), fast response cutter USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142) and Royal Navy

mine countermeasures vessels HMS Chiddingfold (M37) and HMS Bangor (M109).

“Putting more eyes out on the water enhances our picture of the surrounding seas and enables us to position our crewed ships to react more rapidly,” said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces.

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

“Whenever we work in the maritime environment, particularly when working alongside international partners, it is critical we have relevant maritime domain awareness,” said Royal Navy Commodore Adrian Fryer, commander of UK’s maritime component based in the Middle East.

“Alongside the more traditional methods, uncrewed systems are an essential tool, and the future, in building this understanding, the picture they provide can enhance the security and stability of the maritime environment,” Fryer added.

U.S. 5th Fleet established an unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force in September 2021 to integrate new technologies into U.S. Navy operations across the Middle East.

In the past 12 months, Task Force 59 has amassed more than 25,000 hours of experience integrating new unmanned systems and artificial intelligence. The task force has also established operating hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan in close cooperation with regional partners.

“We have already achieved more today than many might have

imagined possible when we started," said Cooper. "Our goal is a distributed and integrated network of systems operated with our partners to significantly expand how far we can see."

General Dynamics Electric Boat Awarded $533 Million for Virginia-Class Submarine Support

Virginia-class attack submarine. *GENERAL DYNAMICS*

GROTON, Conn. – General Dynamics Electric Boat, a business unit of General Dynamics, announced Oct. 6 it was awarded a U.S. Navy contract modification for lead-yard support, development studies and design efforts related to Virginia-class attack submarines.

The contract modification has a value of $532.9 million. Work will be performed in Groton, Connecticut, and Newport News, Virginia, and is expected to be completed by October 2023.

“We are proud to continue to support the design and engineering of Virginia-class submarines to ensure they have the superior warfighting capabilities the U.S. Navy needs to defend our Nation,” said Kevin Graney, president of Electric Boat. “The continued evolution of the Virginia class over the last two decades guarantees our sailors the asymmetric advantage they deserve.”

General Dynamics Electric Boat designs, builds, repairs and modernizes nuclear submarines for the U.S. Navy. Headquartered in Groton, the company employs approximately 18,000 people.

Coast Guard Interdicts 87 Lanchas off Texas Coast in Fiscal 2022

Coast Guardsmen from Station South Padre Island, Texas, catch and detain Mexican nationals aboard a lancha after crews in Coast Guard aircraft spotted them fishing illegally in U.S. territorial waters Friday, May 1, 2015. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 1st Class Andrew Kendrick*

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Coast Guard law enforcement crews interdicted 87 lanchas, seized 15,809 pounds of catch and detained 373 fishermen off the Texas coast during fiscal year 2022, the Coast Guard 8th District said in a release.

Since the first recorded lancha interdiction in the late 1980s, the Coast Guard has seen a significant uptick in the detection of the vessels, recording an 11.5 percent increase in interdicted lanchas from fiscal year 2021.

A noteworthy case from this year occurred on Aug. 30, when Coast Guard crews interdicted three lanchas with a total of 14 Mexican fishermen, 2,425 pounds of red snapper and 440 pounds of shark aboard.

To counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the

Coast Guard utilizes a layered approach for operations through aircraft, small boats and cutters.

Up to 27 million tons of fish are caught illegally each year throughout the world. IUU fishing accounts for 20 to 30 percent of global annual catch. Global losses from IUU fishing are estimated to be as much as $23.5 billion per year.

“We view the lancha issue as an immediate threat to our living marine resources, border security, and U.S. sovereignty,” said Lt. Cmdr. Brendan Dunn, assistant chief of enforcement, Coast Guard District Eight. “In recent years, the illegal trade of red snapper, grouper, shark and other reef fish species has become extremely lucrative for the transnational criminal organizations operating in Mexico. With the continual increase of at-sea lancha interdictions, we would like to recognize the tremendous efforts of our field units at Coast Guard Sector and Air Station Corpus Christi, Station South Padre Island, our fast response cutters and patrol boats. We also thank our regional, state and federal partners for their tenacious commitment, professionalism, and teamwork to support this mission.”

A lancha is a fishing boat used by Mexican fishermen that is approximately 20-30 feet long with a slender profile. They typically have one outboard motor and are capable of traveling at speeds exceeding 30 mph. Lanchas pose a major threat, usually entering the United States Exclusive Economic Zone near the U.S.-Mexico border in the Gulf of Mexico with the intent to smuggle people, drugs or poach the United States’ natural resources.

Coast Guard Offloads $6.5 million in Seized Cocaine, Transfers 4 Smugglers

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser and Caribbean Corridor Strike Force agents offloaded 721 pounds (327kgs) of cocaine Oct. 5, 2022 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, following the interdiction of a smuggling vessel in the Mona Passage Sept. 26, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Ricardo Castrodad*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser and Caribbean Corridor Strike Force agents offloaded 721pounds (327kgs) of cocaine Oct. 5 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, following the interdiction of a smuggling vessel in the Mona Passage, the Coast Guard 7th Disrict said in a release.

The four men apprehended in this case claimed to be Dominican

Republic nationals who are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico for Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance Aboard a Vessel Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States. This charge carries carry a minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life. An additional charge includes Assaulting Federal Officers with a Deadly Weapon, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment.

The Transnational Organized Crime Assistant U.S. Attorney Jorge Matos from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for this case, while Special Agents supporting the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force are leading the investigation.

During the late-night hours of Sept. 26, 2022, the aircrew of a Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine multi-role enforcement aircraft detected a suspect go-fast vessel in waters northwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico. With Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser in pursuit, the smugglers jettisoned multiple bales of suspected contraband into the water. The Winslow Griesser crew stopped the suspect vessel, apprehended the four men and recovered 12 bales of the jettisoned contraband, which later tested positive for cocaine.

"I cannot be prouder of the Winslow Griesser crew, especially our small boat crew, whose skill and professionalism were instrumental in stopping this drug smuggling go-fast vessel," said Lt. Cmdr. Mark Tatara, cutter Winslow Griesser commanding officer. "We appreciate our Customs and Border Protection and our Coast Guard watchstanders who worked seamlessly to ensure a successful outcome in this case that helped keep these drugs from reaching the shores of Puerto Rico and bring those responsible to justice."

Cutter Winslow Griesser is a 154-foot fast response cutter

that is homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.