Modly: Unmanned Systems 'Huge Priority' in Building a Bigger Fleet

WASHINGTON – When talking about the future fleet size, the Navy's No. 2 civilian leader says he calls it "355-plus," with the "plus" meaning a lot of unmanned systems and other innovative things not normally considered part of the fleet.

"Unmanned is a huge priority for the Navy," which is looking at a range of systems to take advantage of the "huge advances in unmanned" technology, Navy Undersecretary Thomas B. Modly told a Defense Writers Group breakfast Oct. 4.

Despite that push to add unmanned systems, Modly said there is no quota or goal for the share of the fleet they will fill.

"We are definitely on a path to building a bigger fleet" and it will include "a bigger integration of unmanned."

The Navy and Marine Corps already are fielding a large number of unmanned air and ground vehicles and surface and subsurface vessels, and are developing larger and more capable systems. The Navy recently awarded a contract to Boeing to produce the MQ-25 Stingray, a carrier-based unmanned aerial refueling jet, and the Marines want a large Group 5 unmanned aerial vehicle that can operate from amphibious ships.

Modly said a new Navy force structure plan should go to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson and Navy Secretary Richard Spencer next month and probably would be released early next year.

A lot of things have changed since the last plan was released in 2016, he said, including the build-up of Chinese capabilities and activities in the Pacific, how unmanned

systems would fit in and the effect of the planned new frigate on the force of small surface combatants.

Modly said the larger fleet obviously would require more Sailors. Asked whether there were concerns that those plans to add personnel would hit the same problems the Army suffered when it fell 6,500 short of its recruiting goal in fiscal 2018, he conceded the Navy "was going to face the same challenges." Recruiting always becomes more difficult in a "hot economy" with low unemployment rates, he said.

"We always have to make the case that the Navy is a good place to start a career," with its training opportunities, and "the ships are more comfortable to live in" than when he served in the Navy several decades ago.

Modly said the Navy was making a maximum effort to improve the sustainability of its ships and aircraft, with investments in the shipyards and a focus on improving the maintenance and supply of spare parts for the F/A-18s, which suffered badly during the years of tight budgets.

He did not believe that the emerging "dynamic deployment" concept would interfere with the planned maintenance cycle for ships, like a similar aggressive deployment plan a decade ago that had caused an epidemic of unfit ships. The ships would make their six-month deployments as scheduled so they could meet the planned maintenance periods, he said.

But what the ships would do during that deployment will be different, he said, noting the recent unusual activities of the USS Harry S. Truman battlegroup.

The "dynamic deployment" concept was proposed by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis who said U.S. forces should be strategically predictable but tactically unpredictable.

Modly recently returned from an extensive tour of many of the small island nations in the Pacific. He said the impression he

gained from their leaders was a strong desire for more U.S. presence, including port visits, and help in improving their capabilities to monitor their territorial waters.

Coast Guard Airdrops Supplies to Disabled Cargo Ship off Bermuda

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — The Coast Guard airdropped a large supply of MREs to a disabled cargo ship approximately 1,380 miles southeast of Bermuda Oct. 2, and continues to monitor the situation, the Fifth Coast guard District said in a release.

The Coast Guard was notified on the morning of Sept. 30 that the 250-foot Tanzanian-flagged cargo ship, Alta, with 10 people onboard, became disabled while transiting from Greece to Haiti, and was unable to make repairs. The crew reported that they had enough food for two days and water for 15 days, and that there were no injuries or immediate medical concerns.

The Coast Guard has been maintaining regular communications with the vessel and utilizing the Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue System to find nearby vessels that may be able to assist.

An aircrew aboard an HC-130 Hercules airplane from Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina, was able to airdrop enough food for one week to the crew Oct. 2, which was retrieved by Alta's crew members. The crew was reported to be in high spirits.

The ship owner has contracted a commercial tug to tow the

vessel to Saint Maarten, which is expected to arrive at the Alta's location next week.

The Coast Guard continues to monitor the Alta and coordinate rescue efforts.

USS Shoup Arrives in Fiji to Promote Maritime Security

SUVA, Fiji – The guided-missile destroyer USS Shoup arrived in Suva Oct. 3 as part of the ship's Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) deployment.

"Our crew is excited to be in Fiji and is ready to execute the OMSI mission," said Cmdr. Andy Strickland, commanding officer of USS Shoup. "Partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard is a new experience for us, and it will demonstrate the extensive range of U.S. Navy assets in providing critical support to embarked boarding teams in enforcing fishery laws."

While in Suva, the USS Shoup will host distinguished visitors, conduct professional exchanges with Fijian sailors, and participate in community events during their port visit.

Shoup's visit to Fiji marks the first stop in the ship's OMSI deployment, which is a secretary of defense program aimed at diminishing transnational illegal activity on the high seas in the Pacific Island nations of Oceania's exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and enhancing regional security and interoperability with partner nations.

"Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing undermines efforts to conserve and manage global fish stocks," said Lt.

Cmdr. Adam Disque, the 14th Coast Guard District response enforcement detachment, embarked aboard Shoup. “The goal of combined efforts by the Navy and Coast Guard through the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative mission is to deter these harmful practices. In partnership with Australia, New Zealand, France, and the Pacific Island Nations, OMSI further promotes extended maritime governance as well as economic and environmental stability throughout Oceania.”

Through bilateral agreements, the U.S. Coast Guard assists 10 Pacific Island nations in patrolling the waters around their EEZs. Each of the nations have territorial waters stretching out 12 miles from shore. Beyond that, stretching out 200 nautical miles are EEZs, an area defined by national law that allows each nation exclusive rights to the exploration and use of maritime resources.

U.S. 3rd Fleet leads naval forces in the Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary for an effective global Navy and constantly coordinates with U.S. 7th Fleet to plan and execute missions that promote ongoing peace, security, and stability throughout the Pacific theater of operations.

Navy Air Warfare Director: C-2 Aircraft Retirement Moved Up to 2024

WASHINGTON – The replacement of the Navy’s C-2A Greyhound carrier on-board delivery (COD) aircraft with the CMV-22B Osprey tiltrotor transport aircraft has been moved up three years because of accelerated procurement of the needed

Ospreys, a Navy admiral said.

“The initial plan was to sundown the C-2 in 2027,” Rear Adm. Scott D. Conn, director of Air Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, testified Sept. 28 before the House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee. “With additional adds [CMV-22Bs] we’ve been able to push that left to FY ’24. The CMV-22 will IOC [reach initial operational capability] in the Navy in 2021. That is mapped to our first F-35 deployment for [F135] engine [transport] considerations. Transition will be complete by FY ’24.”

The Navy operates two squadrons of C-2As (for a total of 34 aircraft) which send out detachments of two aircraft with each carrier deployment.

Conn noted that the C-2A is more than 30 years old and is accordingly more difficult to sustain.

“We have gone from a 32 percent mission-capable rate in 2017 to 40 percent in ’18, so the trend is in the right direction, but it is nowhere near where we want it to be,” he said. “We’re going to continue to make those investments to make sure those aircraft are safe to get airborne until the end of its service life. I have to fully fund that aircraft until I’m completely done with it.”

He said the CMV-22 on a hot tropical day fully loaded with 10,000 pounds of cargo will be able to fly in excess of 1,100 nautical miles, “which meets our requirements for combat operations.”

The first CMV-22B in being built at the Boeing plant in Ridley, Pennsylvania, and will be delivered in 2020.

Conn said the CMV-22 will enjoy a shortened test program because its modifications are slight.

“We have to do a modified operational test,” he said. “The

only thing we're testing are that things that are different on the CMV-22 as compared to the MV-22. That's going to be a very compressed test.

"We then IOC and get our first three aircraft to deploy in 2021," he said. "There is no means by which I can accelerate that any further when you look at the [facilities construction], the training that's required for our Sailors to operate and maintain, and the aircrew that have to fly it and get the hours they need. We're going as fast as we can go. Any additional aircraft at this point would relieve or provide a shock absorber during the transition as we go from transition to deployment to follow-on detachments until we're completely divested of our C-2."

Valiant Returns Home Following Counterdrug Patrol

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Valiant returned home Oct. 3 to Naval Station Mayport following a six-week counterdrug patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the 7th Coast Guard District said in an Oct. 3 release.

The Valiant crew patrolled over 7,000 nautical miles in the Caribbean in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South. During their patrol, the crew worked closely with partner nations such as the Netherlands.

After careful preparation and coordination, Valiant joined forces with the HNLMS Friesland, a Royal Netherlands Navy offshore patrol vessel, and the Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon to ensure the safe and expeditious transfer of four suspected drug smugglers to U.S. law enforcement officials.

The Valiant crew also contributed to an interagency operation, which will support the dismantling of a transnational criminal organization.

A crew from Jacksonville's Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) joined the Valiant crew during their counterdrug patrol. HITRON is America's first airborne law enforcement unit trained and authorized to employ airborne use of force and intercept vessels suspected of transporting illicit narcotics into the United States.

"We had a very successful patrol this summer, ensuring the Caribbean remained a challenging and unwelcome place for drug smugglers to operate, combatting transnational organized crime networks, and keeping drugs off U.S. streets," said Cmdr. Matthew Waldron, Valiant's commanding officer. "My first patrol as commanding officer of Valiant, I couldn't be more proud of this crew. As always, we are excited and ready to return to our families and friends back in our homeport of Mayport."

The Valiant is a multimission 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, homeland security, and national defense operations.

Ultra Wins Subcontract as Part of the Underwater Warfare Suite Upgrade Project

DARTMOUTH, Nova Scotia – Ultra Electronics Maritime Systems (Ultra) has been awarded a significant contract award from

General Dynamics Mission Systems–Canada to supply the new in-line transmitter and receiver array as part of General Dynamics' successful win of the Underwater Warfare Suite Upgrade (UWSU) project for the Royal Canadian Navy, Ultra said in an Oct. 2 release.

Combined with the recently completed Halifax-class modernization program, the UWSU project will enable a step-change in underwater search capability that will see Canada's Halifax-class frigates well-equipped for antisubmarine warfare (ASW) operations long into the future.

Ultra's transmitter solution for UWSU is a made-in-Canada solution originally conceived at Defence Research and Development Canada Atlantic Research Laboratory. The solution enables sound energy to be steered only in the direction of interest, and with the transmitter and receiver combined in-line in a single towed array, the requirement for a second independent tow for the transmitter is eliminated – allowing the single reelable array to be installed on the Halifax class with minimal modification.

The single-tow, in-line transmitter also significantly increases the ship's operational envelope because of the transmitter's ability to operate at full power in shallow waters. Ultra's array solution for UWSU is second-generation technology that has been operationally proven with international customers.

"We are proud that our UWSU passive-active, in-line, reelable sonar brings to Canada an innovative low-frequency active ASW solution that will provide a significant increase in capability for the Royal Canadian Navy," said Bernard Mills, president of Ultra Electronics Maritime Systems.

Navy Awards Northrop Grumman New AARGM Contract

LOS ANGELES – The U.S. Navy has awarded Northrop Grumman Corp. a $171 million contract for Lot 7 full-rate production (FRP) of the AGM-88E Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile (AARGM). The contract will deliver advanced capability to U.S. warfighters as well as the Italian Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force to counter the accelerating proliferation of surface-to-air threats.

“The rapid proliferation of today’s threats requires the most advanced solution to detect and defeat surface-to-air-threats and protect our nation and allies,” said Cary Ralston, vice president and general manager, defense electronic systems, Northrop Grumman. “AARGM is an affordable, game-changing solution and we are proud to provide this capability to the warfighter.”

AARGM is a supersonic, air-launched tactical missile system, upgrading legacy AGM-88 HARM systems with capability to perform destruction of enemy air defense missions. AARGM is the most advanced system for pilots, with in-cockpit, real-time electronic order of battle situational awareness against today’s modern surface-to-air threats. It is able to rapidly engage traditional and non-traditional advanced land- and sea-based air-defense threats, as well as striking, time-sensitive targets.

AARGM is a U.S. Navy and Italian Air Force international cooperative major acquisition program with the U.S. Navy as the executive agent. AARGM is currently deployed and supporting operational requirements for the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. The missile is integrated into the weapons systems on the FA-18C/D Hornet, FA-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler aircraft.

The Italian Air Force recently completed operational testing of AARGM on its Tornado Electronic Combat and Reconnaissance aircraft. A series of flight tests culminated with direct hits on critical air defense threat targets, confirming the operational effectiveness and suitability of AARGM on the Italian Air Force Tornado and allowing the Italian Air Force to transition AARGM into operational squadrons.

Advanced Arresting Gear System Completes Performance Testing for Turboprop Aircraft

SAN DIEGO – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS)'s Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG) performance testing has been successfully completed for the C-2A Greyhound, E-2C+ Hawkeye and E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft, the company announced in an Oct. 2 release.

The testing supports the Navy's development of a propeller Aircraft Recovery Bulletin (ARB), which is a prerequisite for arresting propeller aircraft aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78). The Navy completed the performance testing of the GA-EMS system on the Runway Arrested Landing Site (RALS) at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey.

"The AAG system is designed to arrest a broader range of aircraft and provide higher reliability and safety margins for the U.S. Navy's Ford-class of aircraft carriers," said Rolf Ziesing, vice president of programs at GA-EMS. "As each aircraft is brought in for testing, AAG continues to perform

reliably, arrestment after arrestment. The successful turboprop arrestments at RALS mark another significant milestone that moves the Navy closer to initiating recovery testing for these aircraft aboard CVN 78."

The AAG system has been exercised extensively, with more than 800 total roll-in and fly-in aircraft arrestments successfully performed at RALS. In addition, nearly double the approximately 400 planned at-sea F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet recoveries during sea trials and shakedown have been completed aboard CVN 78. GA-EMS continues to collaborate closely with the Naval Air Systems Command and the shipbuilder to optimize the AAG system and the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS), and support upgrades during the CVN 78 Post Shakedown Availability (PSA).

"We continue to stress the system, analyze results, and tune the system to ensure maximum performance," said Dean Key, senior director of EMALS/AAG programs at GA-EMS. "We are on target to be ready for fleet operations when CVN 78 completes its PSA in 2019. We are pleased with AAG's performance and remain focused on optimizing the system's capabilities to meet the daily operations and mission requirements for CVN 78 and the next two Ford-class carriers currently under construction."

AAG is a turbo-electric system designed for controlled deceleration of aircraft. AAG is installed aboard CVN 78 along with EMALS, which uses electromagnetic technology to launch aircraft from the deck of naval aircraft carriers. Both systems have been successfully tested during at-sea periods aboard CVN 78 and are currently in production for the future John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) and Enterprise (CVN 80) aircraft carriers.

Viasat Releases New Security Capabilities for Global Naval Forces

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia – Viasat Inc., a global communications company, has made new security capabilities available for U.S. and international Five Eyes (FVEY) naval forces, the company said in an Oct. 2 release.

Viasat introduced its integrated Mobile Dynamic Defense (MDD) cybersecurity software for use at sea to securely capture and distribute sensitive data to onshore counterparts and defend against rapidly evolving cyber threats during a maritime mission.

MDD is highly valuable for maritime platforms because of its ability to provide the necessary policy enforcement and in-mission configuration flexibility without a connection to a remote management system by using the information assurance "Defense in Depth" model, which weaves together multiple layers of security controls and countermeasures. This model enables the Viasat MDD platform to ensure sensitive information hosted on the end user device (EUD) is continually checked and protected from compromise – even if the EUD is disconnected from the military operations center.

"Hackers are increasingly looking to compromise mobile devices as a way to gain access to classified government and military data," said Ken Peterman, president, Government Systems, Viasat. "By providing Viasat's MDD software, naval personnel now have the ability to provision and configure devices as a mission changes – which can help secure highly-sensitive

mission information and defend against emerging cyber threats – even at sea."

MDD software is an integral component of Viasat's comprehensive cybersecurity platform, which analyzes terabits of data across commercial and government networks on a daily basis to defend against some of the world's most sophisticated cyber threats. Viasat currently offers secure, high-speed and resilient satellite communications-enabled services via its Hybrid Adaptive Network concept for a range of U.S. and FVEY military operations.

Viasat's MDD security capabilities are now authorized for purchase by naval and maritime customers in the Five Eyes countries: United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

New Navy Unit to Replace Special Projects Patrol Squadron

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has established a new unit to sustain a special mission capability in its maritime patrol community with the coming retirement of the P-3 Orion aircraft.

A Sept. 10 internal directive from the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations directed the establishment on that date of Fleet Support Unit One at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, one of two sites that serve as home bases for the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrols aircraft.

According to the directive, Fleet Support Unit One “will configure and operate P-8 aircraft to provide a follow-on special mission capability in place of [special] projects patrol squadron (VPU) P-3 aircraft due to sundown in 2019.”

The mission of the unit will be to provide “oversight, training, operations, maintenance, and configuration management for the P-8 quick reaction capability aircraft,” according to the directive.

Fleet Support Unit One will have an officer in charge rather than a commanding officer, who will report to commander, Patrol Reconnaissance Wing 11, at Jacksonville.

The Navy’s sole VPU squadron, VPU-2, operates several specially configured P-3C Orion aircraft from Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. The squadron is scheduled for deactivation in fiscal 2019 in concert with the phase-out of the P-3C from operational active-duty patrol squadrons.