Navy to Combine F-35C Replacement Training Squadrons in 2019

Navy to Combine F-35C Replacement Training Squadrons in 2019ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy plans to deactivate one of its two F-35C fleet replacement training squadrons next year and combine its aircraft and personnel within the other replacement training squadron.

According to a Navy internal directive dated Sept. 10, the Navy intends to deactivate Strike Fighter Squadron 101 (VFA-101) on July 1. VFA-101 is based at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and is mainly involved in training instructor and test pilots for the F-35C.

The Navy will "realign" VFA-101 assets into VFA-125, the fleet replacement training squadron based at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, California.

"This will co-locate the fleet [replacement] squadron production of pilots directly into the operational squadrons scheduled for transition to F-35C and meet testing and evaluation requirements for initial operating capability of VFA-147 as the first [F-35C] joint strike fighter deployer in fiscal year '21," the directive said. "The move of VFA-101 personnel and aircraft also supports Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center advanced training at NAS Fallon, Nevada."

VFA-101, a former fleet replacement squadron for the F-14 Tomcat fighter, was reactivated in 2012 and began flying the F-35C in 2013.

HII Lands New Radar Tower on USS George Washington

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' (HII's) Newport News Shipbuilding division has completed approximately 25 percent of the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) work aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington following the recent landing of its modernized radar tower, the company said in a Sept. 21 release.

USS George Washington is the sixth Nimitz-class ship to undergo this major lifecycle milestone and the first to have its new radar tower installed as one complete structure instead of two individual units.

"This is a significant engineering, planning and construction improvement," said Chris Miner, Newport News' vice president, in-service aircraft carrier programs. "This lift was the result of our digital shipbuilding efforts to harness the use of technology, including visual work instructions that allowed us to increase efficiency and productivity. We look forward to continuing to work with our Navy customers to improve our RCOH processes."

The RCOH began under a planning contract in August 2017 and includes the refueling of the ship's reactors as well as extensive modernization to more than 2,300 compartments, 600 tanks and hundreds of systems. In addition to the radar tower structure, major upgrades will be made to the island house, flight deck, catapults, combat systems and the island.

The overhaul is expected to be completed in late 2021.

ONR Delivers Capability to Navy Divers

ARLINGTON, Va. – For U.S. Navy deep-sea divers, time is of the essence. While operating 100 feet down, with little to no natural light – often in frigid temperatures and limited oxygen – time is everything.

But for divers, time remains a precious commodity on the surface as well.

For years, military divers have had to manually write and log information from dives while at sea into a system known as the Dive/Jump Reporting System (DJRS). Manually entering entries can be time-consuming and allow human error.

Enter the Office of Naval Research (ONR) Global TechSolutions program – a rapid-response science and technology program focused on solutions to problems submitted by Sailors and Marines.

ONR TechSolutions and industry partners have created a new tool called the Scuba Binary Dive Application (SBDA) 100 to digitally plan, record and report dive-profile information to DJRS. The application will accelerate the process of logging and uploading dive information, and will help eliminate potential data-entry mistakes, ONR reported in a Sept. 19 release.

The idea originated from Force Master Diver Scott Brodeur, Naval Expeditionary Combat Command.

“Scott has completed over a thousand dives during his career and he recognized the need to make the logging and reporting

process more efficient for his peers," said Jason Payne, TechSolutions acting program manager.

The SBDA 100 is a software application on a ruggedized tablet used to log, compute and accurately compile dive-profile data.

The data – collected from a wrist watch that divers wear during operations called a Navy Diver Computer – includes dive site conditions, equipment used by the divers, dive events (such as when a diver left the surface or left the bottom of the ocean floor) and if the dive required decompression stops. SBDA 100 syncs this information and automatically uploads it to DJRS.

"For years, I witnessed how many hours it takes to manually log dives – watching the young guys that have to – at the end of a long 12- to 14-hour day – come back and manually go through the dive logs and write everything down, and double check it and triple check it," said Brodeur.

During a recent training exercise in the Gulf of Mexico, Brodeur, the Naval Experimental Dive Unit and other U.S. Navy divers stationed around the globe had the opportunity to test the technology for the first time.

"The designers gave me a crash course on how to operate the technology," said Chief Navy Diver Marshall Goble, ship repair facility, Yokosuka, Japan. "I used the device as a primary but still used the 'old school' way and wrote down the information as well. Both calculations came out 100-percent accurate. I found the tablet easier to use, and I have no doubt it's going to streamline efficiency."

Throughout the process of the development of the SBDA 100, ONR TechSolutions has worked in conjunction with Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) Atlantic; industry partner Intelligent Automation Inc.; and Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Panama City, which is the home of the U.S. Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center. SPAWAR served as the principal

investigator and NSWC Panama City provided technical support and hosted the training and demonstration of the SBDA 100 at sea.

“The technology has tested very well,” said Brodeur. “It’s a testament to the value of the ONR TechSolutions program and everyone who worked on this project. Witnessing this idea come to fruition and have it be built, demonstrated, designed and ready for use is pretty exciting.”

Coast Guard Updates North Carolina Hurricane Florence Response

GOLDSBORO, N.C. – The Coast Guard continues to coordinate with federal, state and local agencies to respond to flooding from Hurricane Florence in North Carolina, the Coast Guard Hurricane Response Media Operations Centers said in a Sept. 18 release.

The service provided the following update of its activities, which include:
■ The Coast Guard has rescued 426 people and 234 pets since Hurricane Florence began.
■ There are 26 shallow-water response boat teams deployed to North Carolina comprising 116 people.
■ There are 191 Coast Guard members assigned to the North Carolina Incident Command Post in Goldsboro, North Carolina.
■ There are four buoy tenders en route to Wanchese, Oak Island, and Atlantic City Beach to assess waterway and port conditions.

“Search and rescue remains the highest priority in the neighborhoods impacted by Hurricane Florence,” said Capt. Bion Stewart, leader of the Coast Guard’s response to Hurricane Florence in North Carolina. “We are also focusing on reopening the ports and waterways to support relief aid and resume commercial operations vital to North Carolina economy and national interesting, working alongside the North Carolina State Port Authority, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Army Corps of Engineers to open the Cape Fear River and Morehead City waterways with safety-focused restrictions this afternoon.”

Phase I Complete for Navy’s Range Support Aircraft Replacement

NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Tactical Airlift Program Office (PMA-207) Commercial Modifications and Range Support (CMARS) Team accepted delivery of its newest commercial-derivative aircraft platform on July 30, Naval Air Systems Command said in a Sept. 6 release.

The Gulfstream G550, with structural modifications, was further modified to house specialized telemetry equipment, unique to the Navy’s application. The G550 is slated to serve as the replacement for one of the aging P-3 range support aircraft operated out of Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division in Point Mugu, California. The aircraft’s structural modifications allow room for installation of a telemetry system and additional equipment to support future missions.

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by Gulfstream

executives and PMA-207 leadership, Program Manager Capt. Steven Nassau spoke to the complexity of this acquisition.

“Just getting to this point has been a process,” Nassau said. “The team had to coordinate with AIR-5.0 Test and Evaluation leadership, AIR-2.0 Contracts, AIR-5.2 Ranges and AIR-5.1 test squadrons for mission equipment and airframe expertise, as well as AIR-6.0 Logistics for sustainment to keep this acquisition on schedule. Delivering the aircraft under cost and on schedule is a major milestone for such a complicated project.”

PMA-207 CMARS Integrated Program Team Lead Chris Mullaney said credit should not only be given to those currently working on this project, but to those who have in the past as well.

“One of the original leads for this project was Jaimie Grubb. She, along with her Range Support Aircraft Team, had impressive foresight and solid planning at the beginning of this endeavor that paved the way for the successes we are seeing here today – delivery of a high-quality product on cost and on schedule,” said Mullaney.

From here, the Phase II Integrator, Raytheon, will receive the G550 aircraft as government-furnished property and will develop, procure and integrate systems that will give the aircraft a multirole capability in telemetry data collection, range safety and surveillance and communications relay. This modern, phased-array telemetry system will have the capability to support major programs in complex, robust and dynamic test environments for many years.

The aircraft is projected to be delivered for initial operating capability by August 2021.

Rising Accident Rates Taking Toll on Navy, Marine Aircraft Availability

RENO, Nev. – The accident rate for the major Class A mishaps in naval aviation is "trending up" and there has been a "major increase" in the more minor Class C accidents, which is aggravating the lack of aircraft availability the Navy and Marine Corps have been struggling to overcome, the Naval Safety Center commander reported.

The naval services are taking a series of steps to reverse the jump in Class C mishaps and aggressively working to develop better analytical tools to help prevent the major accidents, which result in the loss of aircraft or personnel or multi-million dollars in damage, Rear Adm. Mark Leavitt said Sept. 8.

Also, following a year-plus of multiple studies and corrective actions, naval aviation has made "good progress" in stopping the surprising increase in physiological episodes, or apparent shortage of oxygen in flight. "But it does remain our No. 1 safety concern," Rear Adm. F. R. "Lucky" Luchtman, the head of the recently created Physiological Episode Action Team, said at the same forum during the annual Tailhook Convention of aircraft carrier aviators.

Leavitt said the Class A accidents in naval aviation this year have "exceeded last year's numbers," with 14 mishaps. "The rate is trending up."

The Marines, however, "are doing much better this year, down to five" Class As, compared to 12 last year, he said.

Although some members of Congress have blamed the higher Class A rates to the age of aircraft and poor maintenance due to the

budget reductions, Leavitt said the accident investigations are “still finding between 60 to 70 percent causal factors are human errors. We’ve not seen a spike of material problems.”

In the Class C mishaps, “this is not a good news story,” Leavitt said, but did not provide numbers for what he called a “major increases.”

Although the C mishaps inflict damages costing a comparatively low $50,000 to $500,000, they can take an aircraft out of service for months, which is aggravating the problems of too few available planes, he said.

Service studies have attributed the increase in the aviation version of fender benders to violations of established procedures by squadron maintenance personnel, which may reflect a lack of experience in the midgrade enlisted maintainers because of faster advancement in rank during a drive to keep more Sailors in service, he said.

The studies also indicate a “breakdown in team work,” which has led to efforts to get more “khaki leadership out on flight line, the flight deck,” Leavitt said, referring to chief petty officers and commissioned officers.

In an effort to reduce the major mishaps, Leavitt said the Safety Center has created a new office focusing on developing analytic tools to provide more data on causes and related factors, which can be shared with squadron commanders to help avoid accidents, he said.

The physiological episode team Luchtman leads is attacking the alarming number of incidents in which pilots in the F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets, EF-18G Growlers and the T-45 and T-6 training aircraft have reported in-flight conditions similar to hypoxia or oxygen shortage.

Luchtman said intensive studies by the Safety Center, NASA and others led to some modifications to the aircraft oxygen supply

systems and indications that poorly fitted pilot's equipment cause some of the incidents.

They also are adding systems to the aircraft that can measure the quality of oxygen being provided to the pilots, he said and are seeking even better devices to monitor the oxygen flow. They are working with the Air Force and allies who fly similar aircraft and have had some of the same problems.

Rolls-Royce to Power Boeing MQ-25 UAV for U.S. Navy

INDIANAPOLIS – Rolls-Royce engines have been selected by Boeing to power the U.S. Navy's new MQ-25 Stingray unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), which will provide unmanned, carrier-based air-to-air refueling, Rolls-Royce announced in a Sept. 6 release.

The U.S. Navy has awarded the MQ-25A engineering and manufacturing contract to Boeing to provide four aircraft. The MQ-25 is designed to provide the Navy with a much-needed refueling capability and extend the range of combat aircraft from carriers.

Each MQ-25 aircraft will be powered by a single Rolls-Royce AE 3007N engine, manufactured in Indianapolis. The AE 3007N, the latest variant of the Rolls-Royce AE family of engines, will provide more than 10,000 pounds of thrust and additional electrical power to the aircraft.

"Congratulations to Boeing for being selected to develop this historic aircraft in support of the U.S. Navy," said Jarrett Jones, Rolls-Royce executive vice president, Customer

Business, Government Relations and Sales. “For Rolls-Royce, it will expand our UAV expertise with unmanned aircraft in the U.S. Navy fleet, which includes the Triton and Fire Scout aircraft.”

The proven Rolls-Royce AE family of engines includes turbofan, turboprop and turboshaft variants, and the total AE engine fleet has accumulated more than 74 million engine flight hours. AE engines power aircraft for the US Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, and a variety of military and civilian aircraft in service around the world. Rolls-Royce has delivered nearly 7,000 AE engines from the company’s advanced manufacturing facility in Indianapolis.

The AE 3007H turbofan engine powers the Navy’s Triton and the Air Force Global Hawk, as well as commercial and business aviation aircraft. The AE 2100 turboprop powers the Lockheed Martin C-130J and LM-100J, as well as the C-27J and Saab 2000; and the AE 1107C turboshaft powers the Bell-Boeing V-22 Osprey operated by the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. The MT7, a marinized variant of the AE 1107, will power the Navy’s Ship-to-Shore Connector hovercraft.

CNO Richardson: Columbia SSBN Program on Track, Help on Margin Needed

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy’s top officer said the program schedule to build the Navy’s next-generation ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) is very tight and some more margin in the program would help.

“What I am pushing the team to do is stay on track,” said Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations (CNO), answering a reporter’s question while speaking Sept. 5 at the Defense News Conference. “But it is right on track. We need to find some margin in that program, largely in schedule, in particular.”

The Columbia-class SSBN is being built to replace the Ohio-class SSBN as the platform for the Navy’s contribution to the national nuclear deterrent, the Trident D5 ballistic missile. The Navy plans to build 12 boats to succeed the 14 Ohio SSBNs as they reach the end of their service lives. Critical is the need for the first Columbia to be ready to deploy for its first ballistic-missile patrol in fiscal 2031.

“In a program of this complexity, it’s just a fact of life that there are going to be things that will surprise us going forward,” Richardson said. “So we need to build in enough margin to accommodate those surprises and also – very important – we make sure that the entire team – the industrial base, the Navy, everybody – understands that a program of this importance, with that little margin, perhaps requires increased oversight so that we’re not making mistakes and eating into a program that has very thin margins already.

The Columbia-class SSBN program is expected to cost $128 billion for acquisition.

CNO Selects Fleet Master Chief Smith as 15th MCPON

ARLINTON, Va. – Following a comprehensive review of potential candidates, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John

Richardson selected Fleet Master Chief Russell Smith to be the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Aug. 29, the Navy's Office of Information said in a release of the same date.

"After a thorough and deliberate review process, I am confident that Fleet Master Chief Smith is the right leader to be our Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy," said Richardson. "I look forward to working with him to advocate for our Sailors and their families selflessly serving around the world."

As the Navy's 15th MCPON, Smith will serve as the senior-ranking enlisted leader and adviser to the CNO.

Coast Guard Repatriates Migrants to the Dominican Republic

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier repatriated five of 12 migrants to the Dominican Republic Aug. 23 after Caribbean Border Interagency Group law enforcement authorities interdicted a boat just off the coast of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Six of the interdicted migrants, five Dominican and one of Mexican nationality, were brought ashore to Puerto Rico where they face potential federal criminal immigration charges for attempted illegal re-entry into the United States. One other Dominican migrant, also brought ashore, is undergoing further immigration processing.

“The coordination and swift response by the Caribbean Border Interagency Group law enforcement authorities involved in this case led to a rapid interdiction and safe removal of all 12 migrants,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, Sector San Juan chief of response. “Migrants should not take to the sea, they not only risk going to jail, but also endanger their lives by entrusting smugglers to bring them across the dangerous waters of the Mona Passage aboard grossly overloaded makeshift boats with little or no lifesaving equipment onboard.”

During a routine patrol in the Mona Passage Aug. 21, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected a 20-foot migrant boat just off Desecheo Island traveling without navigational lights toward the west coast of Puerto Rico. Coast Guard Sector San Juan watchstanders diverted Joseph Napier to interdict the vessel and alerted Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action of the situation. An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen also responded to support the interdiction and provide any needed rescue assistance.

Shortly thereafter, the Puerto Rico Police marine unit came alongside and stopped the migrant vessel as Joseph Napier arrived on scene. The crew of Joseph Napier safely embarked all 12 migrants, 10 men and a woman of Dominican nationality and another man who was a Mexican national.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Ramey Sector Border Patrol Agents in Puerto Rico took custody of the migrants facing prosecution, while the Joseph Napier transported the remaining migrants to Dominican Republic waters, where they embarked a Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat.

Joseph Napier is 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.