Navy Picks BAE Systems to Develop Cyber Defenses

MCLEAN, Va. – The Navy has chosen BAE Systems to compete for future cyber-engineering task orders awarded under a seven-and-a-half-year, indefinite-delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract, according to a BAE release.

The contract is intended to be used by naval, joint and national agencies seeking lifecycle service support for command, control, communications, computers and combat systems. Additional task orders may be awarded to improve the capabilities and security of various signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, electronic warfare, surveillance and reconnaissance systems.

“This award creates new opportunities for us to showcase our expertise in cyber-threat exploitation and analysis, computer network defense and security-focused systems engineering,” said Kris Busch, who is vice president of BAE Systems’ Integrated Defense Solutions business.

“We are also introducing new advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and machine-learning solutions that will further improve our nation’s ability to defend against future land, sea, air, space, cyber and electromagnetic warfare threats.”

The award also may be used to develop, test, produce and field next-generation autonomous and unmanned missions systems, according to BAE Systems, which is one of 10 companies chosen to compete for task orders awarded under the IDIQ, managed by Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Atlantic. The maximum value for all future task orders awarded under the contract is $898 million.

Coast Guard Cutter Returns Home After Seizing $43 Million in Cocaine

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Dependable returned home to Virginia Beach, Va., on Feb. 25 after a 59-day patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a Feb. 26 release.

While deployed, Dependable's crew aided Joint Interagency Task Force South in conducting counter-drug and alien migrant interdiction operations.

During their patrol, Dependable's boarding team intercepted a go-fast vessel off the coast of Mexico that was specially fitted to smuggle contraband. Once on scene, the boarding team confirmed that the vessel was carrying narcotics along with three suspected drug smugglers. The interdiction resulted in the seizure of about 1,235 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated street value of $18 million.

Dependable's crew also worked alongside four partner assets to patrol an operational area roughly the size of the U.S. The cutter's crew worked with the U.S. Navy and Customs and Border Protection Maritime Patrol Aircraft to conduct aerial surveillance alongside other Coast Guard cutters patrolling the region. As a result of these collaborations, Dependable's crew was able to assist Coast Guard Cutter Alert's crew with a transfer of drugs and suspected smugglers apprehended in previous interdictions.

The Dependable crew also leveraged the cutter's embarked Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), the

members of which launched in an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and disrupted a drug-smuggling operation. The squadron seized an estimated 1,653 pounds of cocaine worth about $25 million and intended for delivery to Mexico.

The Dependable crew sailed 12,904 miles and traveled nearly as far south as the Galapagos Islands and as far west as Acapulco, Mexico. In addition to the cutter's permanent crewmembers, teams from Tactical Law Enforcement Team South, based in Miami, and HITRON, based in Jacksonville, Fla., were aboard for the patrol. Each team provided expertise regarding maritime law enforcement and aerial use of force.

The Virginia Beach-based Cutter Dependable is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium-endurance cutter with a permanent crew of 77. They conduct homeland security missions in the offshore waters of the Western Hemisphere, from New England to the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific.

Having surpassed its 50th year of service to America last November, Dependable and the other 26 medium-endurance cutters are slated for replacement by new Offshore Patrol Cutters beginning in 2021.

NNSA Completes First Low-Yield W76-2 Nuclear Warhead for Trident Missile

WASHINGTON – The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) successfully completed the First Production Unit (FPU) of the W76-2 warhead on Feb. 22 at the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas, according to a NNSA

release on Feb. 25.

The W76-2 FPU represents NNSA's ability to achieve a significant program milestone in support of a national security initiative requested by the president in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review.

"NNSA is fully committed to meeting the requirements of our partners at the Department of Defense," said Dr. Charles P. Verdon, NNSA's deputy administrator for defense programs. "The W76-2 will allow for tailored deterrence in the face of evolving threats."

The W76-2 program is a modification of the W76-1 warhead to provide a low-yield, sea-launched ballistic-missile warhead capability.

NNSA is on track to complete the W76-2 Initial Operational Capability warhead quantity and deliver the units to the Navy by the end of fiscal 2019.

Navy Undersea Warfare Director: 'We Cannot Be Out-Escalated' in Nuclear Deterrence

WASHINGTON — The Navy's director for undersea warfare said the nation's nuclear submarine-based strategic deterrent is more important than ever and that the 12 planned Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) are needed to sustain a credible strategic triad for the future.

Speaking Feb. 2 at a discussion of the Columbia SSBN event at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington think tank, Rear Adm. John W. Tammen pointed out that, with the new era of great power competition, “the need for deterrence has never been greater. That’s based on the destructive [power] of modern-day weapons and the competitive landscape that we are seeing with [Russia’s and China’s attempts] to make their place in the global domain.

“We have to own the top rungs of the escalation ladder,” Tammen said. “Our competitors must understand that we cannot be out-escalated in our part of the [strategic] triad and we must have the will and the credible capability to respond as necessary to their aggression and the cost that they would take would be greatly outweighed by any perceived gains.”

Tammen said that all three legs of the U.S. strategic deterrent triad – bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles – are important, as are the command, control and communications systems associated with those weapons.

Tammen said the most survivable leg – the SSBN – “gives the president time to make a decision. He does not have to worry that he is going to have an attack that will decimate his ability to respond.”

The requirement for at least 12 Columbia-class SSBNs is predicated on having 10 available for deterrence patrols while two are in deep maintenance. The 12 new subs, which replace 14 Ohio-class SSBNs, will have 42-year service lives because their reactors will never need refueling.

Tammen said that, with the Columbia class, the nation will get an ultra-quiet platform that will benefit from the success of the Virginia-class attack submarine program, that will leverage more than 50 years of SSBN experience, and that will deploy a weapon – the Trident D5LE missile – that has had 11

successful test launches.

Navy Admirals: SWO Proficiency Standards Toughened With New Checkpoints

WASHINGTON – The Navy's efforts to improve training and the readiness of its surface warfare officers (SWOs) now include longer initial sea duty tours and a series of checkpoints that must be passed before an officer can command a ship.

The new standards result from the Navy's reassessment of surface warfare training in the wake of the fatal collisions of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain in mid-2017.

Testifying Feb. 26 before a joint hearing of the Readiness and the Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittees of the House Armed Services Committee on Capitol Hill, Adm. Christopher W. Grady, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Naval Forces Northern Command, and Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, also told Congress that ships will not deploy without having met the training standards.

Grady said the Navy is working to develop a culture where "we view standards as the absolute minimum."

"If ships of the Pacific Fleet aren't ready, they don't get underway," Aquilino said. Noting that manning challenges are being relieved by an additional 6,200 sailors earmarked

fleetwide for ships, he said, “No [ship] deploys without the full complement of people that they will have.”

Aquilino, who is briefed on the status of his ships three times per week and talks to his commanders weekly, said that since he took command of the Pacific Fleet, he has terminated the deployments of two ships that were not ready. He also said he has granted no waivers.

“We adhere to those [standards] rigorously,” he said.

Grady said that commanding officers are required to submit letters to their type commander 90 days after assuming command on the readiness of their ships.

He said SWO training has lengthened, from 14 weeks to 23 weeks, with much more time in simulators. A few years ago, SWO school was only four weeks long and then was shut down altogether for a few years while officers learned via compact discs (“SWOs in a Box”).

“The total duration at sea for a young division officer is now going to be four years,” he said.

“We have recognized that it is all about the appropriate experience,” Grady said.

Ten milestone checkpoints in a career have been established to track the progress of a SWO from ensign to captain toward command of a ship. Three of these checkpoints are go/no-go decision points.

“If you fail one of those three checkpoints, we’re not going to let you command a ship,” Grady said.

“This is the culture of excellence that we’re [inculcating] and, to this point, 5 percent of those folks have been asked to leave the command pipeline [because] they were not ready.”

Aquilino said he was impressed with the effectiveness of the

simulators for the littoral combat ships.

“That model is going to be transitioned into the destroyer [force] as well,” he said. “The way we train is getting better. That will allow us to more quickly get those up to speed who haven’t had it.”

The fleets also are focusing on the training of enlisted operations specialists and quartermasters – the two ratings most involved in the navigation of a ship.

Grady also said “the complexity of a modern warship” demands that the Navy maintain its generalist approach that SWOs be both operations and engineering officers, unlike the Royal Navy, which splits SWOs into separate operations and engineering tracks.

Grady cited the example of the Ticonderoga-class cruiser USS Princeton that struck a mine during the Persian Gulf War.

“The two officers that were on watch and responded to that were the weapons officer and the engineering officer, both of whom so well understood the complexity of the integration of the combat systems and the engineering plant [and] how to maneuver the ship that they were able to keep fighting for 72 hours by pointing the deckhouse up-threat into Iraq,” he said. “That’s why you need officers who are both engineers and topside ship drivers.”

CPI Aero Announces $8.1 Million Contract for E-2D

Wing Kits From Northrop Grumman

EDGEWOOD, N.Y. – CPI Aerostructures Inc. has received a contract with a maximum value of $8.1 million from Northrop Grumman Corp. for outer wing panel kits used in the manufacture of complete wings for the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, CPI Aero announced in a Feb. 25 release. CPI Aero has produced outer wing panel kits since 2008 for the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, the U.S. Navy's carrier-based airborne early warning and control aircraft.

"Exceptional program execution, superior product quality and the ability to provide value to our customers lies at the heart of our ongoing ability to secure multiyear defense contracts with leading defense technology companies," said Douglas McCrosson, president and chief executive officer of CPI Aero. "We are pleased to have the opportunity to extend our long-standing partnership with Northrop Grumman for an additional six years as a key member of 'Team Hawkeye.'"

Corps Asks Industry for Longer Range, Mobile Fires Technologies for LAR Battalions

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps is asking industry to show which technologies could be ready shortly to give its armored scout units a long-range, precision, on-the-move fires

capability that could include unmanned aerial sensors, loitering guided munitions and command-and-control systems.

“We’re looking to give the Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) battalions this capability. What does industry have out there with range from 7,000 meters out to 100 kilometers?” Lt. Col. Bradley Sams, program manager for fires at Marine Corps Systems Command, said Feb. 25.

The Corps wants something with greater range and precision than the 81mm mortars that are carried by one version of its light armored vehicles (LAV). “Whether that [is] loitering munitions or a missile,” Sams told reporters in a conference call. “We’re asking industry to tell us what they have now or in development.”

The program, called Organic Precision Fires-Mounted (OPF-M), would be integrated into LAR battalions, probably co-located with the 81mm mortars company, with the weapons mounted on a LAV, a lightly armored, highly mobile eight-wheel vehicle that comes in multiple variants, said Jeff Nebel, the fires team leader. The new system would “take advantage of the sensors that already exist in the battalion. But we’re also interested in exploring other sensors that could support this capability.”

The combined systems “would support the LAR platoons up forward,” Nebel said.

The weapons employed by the OPF-M system could include loitering munitions, which are tube-launched, small rockets with optical or other sensors that can stay airborne for limited periods while the controller finds a suitable target. Later munitions might feature artificial intelligence and target-recognition capability to search for and strike defined targets, Nebel said.

Systems Command has issued requests for information (RFI) and an invitation to attend industry days March 13 and March 14 at

Mary Washington University’s campus in Dahlgren, Va.

“We are looking for what’s in the realm of possibilities, what’s available in the next year, year and a half,” to help them clarify the requirements and the concepts of operations, Sams said.

The RFIs and industry days are “kind of a transition from work that’s already been done on the capabilities side” at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), which has been doing some experiments and demonstrations the last couple of years, he said. “This is a hand-off from experimentation to acquisition.”

Sams said the U.S. Army has been working with the warfighting laboratory and has been helpful in sharing some of its developments in precision fires.

The current plan is to award a contract in the first quarter of fiscal 2020, with a demonstration of the proposed technologies eight to 12 months later, leading to low rate production and fielding an initial capability in the first quarter of fiscal 2022, Nebel said. Then an incremental approach would be followed to field newer technologies to enhance and upgrade the system, he said.

Marine Corps Systems Command said in a statement that the program was part of Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller’s emphasis on rapidly fielded, longer-range precision fires in preparation for a conflict with a peer competitor, such as Russia or China.

Construction Begins on Future LCS USS Canberra

MOBILE, Ala. – Construction on the future USS Canberra (LCS 30) began Feb. 22 in Austal USA's module manufacturing facility, the company said in a release of the same date. Dave Growden, LCS program director, pushed the button to start the router that cut the first piece of aluminum, signaling start of construction for the 15th Independence-variant littoral combat ship.

LCS 30 will be the second U.S. Navy vessel to bear the name USS Canberra in honor of Australia's capital city. In 1943, the first USS Canberra joined the U.S. Navy, serving with distinction in the Pacific in World War II, the Cuban Missile Crisis blockade and the Vietnam War.

"It's a privilege to be building a U.S. Navy combat ship named for the capital of Australia, the birthplace of Austal USA's parent organization," said Austal USA President Craig Perciavalle. "The Independence-variant LCS will play a prominent role in the safety and security of the Pacific as our ships deploy forward this year and for years to come."

Austal USA has delivered nine littoral combat ships to the U.S. Navy, while six are currently under construction (LCS 20-30) and four are awaiting the start of construction following LCS 30.

LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable ship designed to support focused mine countermeasures, antisubmarine warfare and surface warfare missions. The ship integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission capability from deep water to the littorals.

As the role of the littoral combat ship continues to evolve as

a key component to the Navy's ability to gain sea control through distributed lethality, Austal USA continues to deliver ships on time and on budget to support the needs of the fleet. The Independence-variant LCS, along with Austal USA's highly successful Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF), are designed, constructed and well-positioned to meet the needs of the fleet today and into the future. The flexibility and capacity of the Austal USA shipyard, the Independence-variant LCS and the EPF are well suited to rapidly and efficiently support the Navy's desired fleet of 355 ships with affordable solutions.

Coast Guard, Partner Agencies Eradicate Illegal Marijuana Plants in the Bahamas

Andros Island, Bahamas – The Coast Guard, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Bahamian authorities have eradicated more than 200,000 illegal marijuana plants in the Bahamas, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Feb. 22 release.

On Feb. 6, 2019, a Coast Guard forward-deployed MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Operation Bahamas, Turks & Caicos (OPBAT) recognized what appeared to be a strong smell of marijuana while flying over Andros Island on a joint narcotic interdiction patrol. The Coast Guard helicopter transported United States DEA agents and Royal Bahamas Police Force Officers from the Drug Enforcement Unit to the area to identify and eradicate over 200,000 marijuana plants.

"The efforts put forth by the Coast Guard, DEA, and the Bahamian Police Force is another success story highlighting the effectiveness of OPBAT's counter-drug operation," said

Cmdr. Mike Benson, the Coast Guard OPBAT Director.

Approximately 460,000 pounds of marijuana were destroyed.

Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos is an international operation between the U.S., the Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos governments to identify, disrupt and dismantle illicit smugglers transiting through the Bahamas.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Future USS Paul Ignatius

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The Navy accepted delivery of the future guided missile destroyer USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117) from Huntington Ingalls Industries'

(HII) Ingalls shipbuilding division, Feb. 22, the Program Executive Office – Ships (PEO-Ships) said in a release of the same date.

Accepting delivery of DDG 117 represents the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder to the Navy. Prior to delivery, the ship conducted a series of at-sea and pier-side trials to demonstrate its material and operational readiness.

The 67th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer honors Paul Robert Ignatius, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II; as secretary of the Navy from 1967- 1969; and as assistant secretary of Defense during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration.

"Our industry partners have delivered another highly capable platform that will provide our Sailors and Nation with warfighting lethality for the next four decades," said Capt.

Casey Moton, DDG 51 class program manager, (PEO) Ships. “We are proud to accept delivery of Paul Ignatius and look forward to her Commissioning ceremony later this summer.”

The DDG 51 class ships currently being constructed are Aegis Baseline 9 Integrated Air and Missile Defense destroyers with increased computing power and radar upgrades that improve detection and reaction capabilities against modern air warfare and Ballistic Missile Defense threats.

In addition to Paul Ignatius, HII’s Pascagoula shipyard is also currently in production on the future destroyers Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), Frank E. Peterson Jr. (DDG 121), Lenah H. Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) and Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), the first Flight III ship. HII is under contract for an additional six Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, awarded as part of the fiscal 2018-2022 multiyear procurement, that will be constructed in the Flight III configuration with enhanced Air and Missile Defense capabilities.