

Russian Missile System Deployments Jeopardize U.S. Commitment to INF Treaty

WASHINGTON – If Russia does not dismantle a cruise missile system that the United States believes violates the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty by Feb. 2, the U.S. will “suspend” compliance with the treaty and begin internal discussions on whether to declare its intent to withdraw from the 1987 pact, the undersecretary for arms control and international security said Jan. 24.

During negotiations last week in Geneva, the Russians acknowledged they have fielded the 9M729 Novator missile but denied it violates the INF range limit, Andrea Thompson said.

The meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov was “professional, not the usual bluster,” Thompson told a Defense Writers breakfast at the George Washington University. “But at the end of the day, we didn’t break any new ground. There was no new information.”

Thompson said the Russians offered to allow U.S. experts to see “a static display” of the Novator, which was rejected as not providing any evidence of the missile’s range. The United States has shared its intelligence findings that show the missile exceeds the 500 kilometers treaty limit (about 300 miles) with Russia and with U.S. allies and partners, she said.

She would not say whether U.S. intelligence has determined if the Novators are armed with nuclear or conventional warheads.

The Russians have deployed five battalions of the missiles, which could hit most U.S. allies in Europe, Thompson said.

“This is not a test system. Soldiers in uniform are manning it,” she said.

The only way Russia could come back into compliance with the INF is to destroy the missile and its launchers, she said.

If the U.S. terminates its commitment to the INF, it would be free to develop and field missiles that match or exceed the Novator, she said. European news services have reported that some NATO allies have expressed concern about ending the INF, fearing it would spur the Russians to field even more missiles. But Thompson said all of the allies and partners agree that Russia has violated the treaty.

She said discussions on whether any of the allies would agree to field a new U.S. missile “have not occurred. We are trying to get Russia back into compliance.”

Asked why the United States would need to develop a new missile when it already has weapons that could threaten Russia, Thompson said, “we need redundant systems to defend ourselves.”

The Russians continue to claim that some U.S. missile defense systems, including the Aegis Ashore installations operational in Romania and under construction in Poland, violate the INF, despite their defensive nature.

Thompson said Russian violation of INF should not affect other arms control agreements. Discussions continue with Moscow on extending the New Start strategic forces treaty, which expires in two years, and the United States remains in compliance with the pact that limits the number of fielded strategic nuclear weapons and warheads.

Marine Rifle Squads Get Upgraded Night Vision Devices

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – An updated helmet-mounted night vision system is beginning to make its way to infantry units. Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) accelerated the acquisition of about 1,300 Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggles (SNBVG) using existing Defense Logistics Agency contracts, the command reported in a release.

“We have employed a bridge capability to give Marines the best gear right now available in the commercial marketplace,” said Lt. Col. Tim Hough, program manager for Infantry Weapons. “A final procurement solution will allow a larger pool of our industry partners to bid on the program.”

Army/Navy Portable Visual Search devices, or AN/PVS, have been employed by the military since at least the 1990s and upgraded with next-generation systems as funding and technology became available.

The move to the SNBVG is expected to enhance the infantry’s lethality and situational awareness in reduced visibility. It combines two systems: a binocular night vision device and an enhanced clip-on thermal imager.

“It’s a little bit lighter than the current system, and gives Marines better depth perception when they are performing movements,” said Joe Blackstone, Optics team lead at MCSC.

Marines took delivery of the equipment and learned how to use them in December at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Known as NET, the new equipment training entails teaching Marines about the operations, characteristics, maintenance and use of the new devices.

“With these new [BNVGs], having the ability to not only use

thermal optics along with it, but just the entire depth perception and speed that we can operate in is going to significantly increase, as opposed to what we were able to do in the past," said Cpl. Zachary Zapata, a Marine who participated in the training.

The initial buy and follow-on procurement are being funded with Marine Corps dollars as prioritized by the Department of Defense Close Combat Lethality Task Force, which concentrates on the squad-level infantry and is aimed at ensuring close combat overmatch against pacing threats. The SBNVG acquisition strategy is to procure the devices incrementally and concurrently as the Corps looks toward future technologies.

"Right now, we are participating with the Army on their next generation night vision systems, both the Enhanced Night Vision Device-Binocular and Integrated Visual Augmentation System Programs," Hough said. "We are eager to see the maturation of these capabilities for adoption to improve the effectiveness of our Marines."

The program office plans on releasing a final request for proposals to procure an estimated 16,000 additional systems on the basis of full and open competition. According to program officials, a draft request for proposals was posted to the Federal Business Opportunities website in mid-November and closed on Dec. 19. The government is currently adjudicating comments and anticipates release of a final request for proposals in the near future.

Additional fielding of the systems is planned for September. While the devices may eventually make their way to the entire Ground Combat Element (GCE), for now the first priority is given to the Marine Rifle Squad, program officials said.

"This program office is committed to bolstering the combat lethality, survivability, resilience and readiness of the GCE," said Hough.

Coast Guard Interdicts Migrants, Suspected Smuggler off Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard interdicted 29 migrants, and one suspected smuggler Jan. 22 following two separate at-sea interdictions, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Two of the interdicted migrants are facing potential federal criminal immigration charges in Puerto Rico for attempted illegal re-entry into the United States, one will be further investigated as a possible smuggler and the other 27 migrants were repatriated to the Dominican Republic, Jan. 23.

The interdiction resulted from ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“An outstanding coordination between the Coast Guard, CBP [Customs and Border Protection], FURA [Puerto Rico Joint Forces of Rapid Reaction] and our other partner agencies was a critical component for our joint crews to safely complete both these interdictions,” said Cmdr. Luis Rodriguez, 7th District deputy chief of enforcement. “These partnerships are not only vital to our maritime border security but are instrumental in stopping these perilous voyages before they end in tragedy.”

On Jan. 22, a CBP Air and Marine Branch aircrew located a migrant vessel approximately 18 miles northeast of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos interdicted the vessel with 10 migrants.

A FURA Cobra unit interdicted 19 migrants, and one suspected smuggler Jan. 22, 4 miles west of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser embarked the 20 migrants.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

Joseph Tezanos and Winslow Griesser are 154-foot fast response cutters homeported in San Juan.

Vigor Awarded Contract for Maintenance of Coast Guard Cutter Healy

SEATTLE – The U.S. Coast Guard’s most technologically advanced polar icebreaker, Healy, arrived at Vigor’s shipyard in Seattle in early January for maintenance, the company announced in a release.

The \$7.3 million contract includes sea valve renewal and overhaul, bow thruster modifications, ballast tank and underwater hull paint preservation and various machinery overhauls.

The Seattle-based vessel will be at Vigor’s Harbor Island facility through June. Healy returned home at the end of November following a four-month deployment in the Arctic.

In addition to providing presence and access in the Arctic during the 129-day summer deployment, the Healy crew completed three research missions in partnership with the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Office of Naval Research, conducting

physical and biological research in the Arctic Ocean.

Along with science operations, Healy is capable of conducting a range of Coast Guard operations such as search and rescue, ship escorts, environmental protection and the enforcement of laws and treaties in the polar regions. Healy provides access and presence throughout the Arctic region to protect U.S. maritime borders and to safeguard the maritime economy.

Navy is Pushing Advances in Offensive Mine Warfare

ARLINGTON, Va. – While mine countermeasures dominate the Navy's efforts in mine warfare, the service has accelerated improvements over the last two years in its weaponry in offensive mine warfare, the ability to lay anti-ship and anti-submarine mines.

The service now is developing the Clandestine Delivered Mine (CDM), Capt. Danielle George, the Navy's mine warfare program manager, said Jan. 17 at the Surface Navy Association convention in Arlington. The Navy is conducting testing of the new cylindrical-shaped mine and is scheduled to conduct end-to-end testing during the second quarter of fiscal 2019. Initial deliveries are scheduled for 2020. George said she was not at liberty to reveal the delivery platform(s) for the CDM.

Another new mine program, started in 2018, is the Hammerhead, an encapsulated torpedo designed to lie in wait for submarines. The capsule for the torpedo would be anchored to the ocean floor, much like the Mk60 CAPTOR mine of Cold War vintage that housed a Mk46 anti-submarine torpedo. (The CAPTOR was withdrawn from the Navy's inventory in 2001.) The

Hammerhead will be designed to have modular architecture to allow for technology insertion. The Navy expects to issue a classified request for information for the Hammerhead this year.

Until recently, the Navy's mine inventory was limited to the Mk62, 63 and 65 Quickstrike air-delivered mines and the Submarine-Launched Mobile Mine. The Mk62 and Mk63 Quickstrike mines are blast/fragmentation 500-pound Mk82 and 1,000-pound Mk83 bombs, respectively, equipped with influence target-detection devices for use in shallow water. The Mk65 is a thin-walled casing with a 2,000-pound warhead and equipped with a target-detection device for magnetic, seismic and pressure detonation.

For these air-delivered mines, the Navy has ordered new target-detection devices and adapters from Sechan Electronics Inc. during the last quarter of fiscal 2018. The Navy also has adapted the Joint Direct-Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kit for the Quickstrike weapons, allowing for more precise seeding of the mines. This capability was demonstrated in Exercise Valiant Shield in 2018. In addition, an extended-range version of the JDAM Quickstrike – through installation of a wing kit – will be tested during the third quarter of fiscal 2019.

The Navy has not laid aerial mines in a conflict since Operation Desert Storm in 1991, when A-6E aircraft seeded mines in Iraqi waters. The capability remained intact, though low-key, in subsequent years.

Coast Guard Rescues 31 from

Disabled Boat North of Bimini

MIAMI – The Coast Guard rescued 31 Haitians from the disabled pleasure craft, Summer Art, Jan. 20 approximately 9 miles north of Bimini, Bahamas, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

At approximately 5 a.m., 7th Coast Guard District watchstanders received a report of a disabled vessel with 31 people aboard approximately 9 miles north of Bimini. Watchstanders authorized the launch of a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry airplane crew and diverted the Cutter Bernard C. Webber crew to the scene. The Bernard Webber crew safely embarked all 31 people and transferred them to Freeport, Bahamas.

“Due to an approaching cold front, high seas and wind made this rescue extremely challenging,” said Cmdr. Jason Aleksak, chief of response at Coast Guard Sector Miami. “The responsiveness and professionalism of the crew of the Bernard C. Webber was remarkable and demonstrated our Coast Guard core value of devotion to duty.”

VT Group Acquires National Technologies Associates Inc.

CHANTILLY, Va. – VT Group announced in Jan. 22 release the acquisition of National Technologies Associates Inc. (NTA), a Patuxent River, Maryland-based firm specializing in program management, engineering and logistics services for military aviation platforms and systems.

Founded in 1981, NTA's 300 employees provide research, development, test and evaluation support and a full spectrum of mission-critical maintenance and sustainment services for fixed and rotary-wing, tilt-rotor, and unmanned aircraft. The acquisition of NTA positions VT Group as a key industry partner to the Defense Department on several high-priority initiatives, including the U.S. Navy's Presidential Helicopter and V-22 Osprey programs.

"NTA shares the VT Group passion for engineering excellence and our commitment to meet the critical needs of the warfighter," said John Hassoun, VT Group president and CEO. "This acquisition adds unique and differentiated expertise to VT Group's aviation solutions portfolio. It will be a force-multiplier for our customers and a catalyst for further growth."

Chief Growth Officer Sunil Ramchand added, "The acquisition of NTA is another important step on our journey to become the industry leader in the C4ISR modernization and sustainment market."

Coast Guard Interdicts Suspected Migrant Smuggling Boat off Florida Coast

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter Bernard C. Webber crew interdicted a boat with six people, including four who did not have current U.S visas, attempting to illegally enter the United States, near Sunny Isles, Jan. 19, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

At approximately 2:40 p.m., the crew of the cutter Bernard C. Webber crew sighted the 20-foot boat heading west approximately 30 miles east of Sunny Isles. Aboard the boat were two U.S. citizens, two Jamaicans, one Dominican and one Bahamian, all adult males.

“While the Coast Guard continues to deal with the lapse in appropriations and identify methods to alleviate the impacts to our workforce, this illegal activity in the Florida straits that threatens our maritime border security, remains a top priority for our service,” said Rear Adm. Peter J. Brown, commander of the 7th Coast Guard District. “I continue to be humbled and inspired by our dedicated Coast Guard women and men who stand the watch and remain dedicated to serve the public during this time of personal financial uncertainty.”

One of the migrants had previous convictions for kidnapping, aggravated assault and narcotics trafficking. A second had previous convictions for the sale of narcotics.

In coordination with the Department of Justice’s Southern District of Florida, the crew of the Bernard C. Webber transferred all persons to Homeland Security Investigations and U.S. Customs and Border Protection for further investigation and possible prosecution.

National Security Cutter Bertholf Departs for Western Pacific Patrol

ALAMEDA, Calif. – On a gray and foggy morning, tears intermingled with rain as family members braved the elements

to say goodbye to the 170 crewmembers of Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf, a 418-foot national security cutter, which departed Alameda, California, Jan. 20 for a patrol in the Western Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release of the same date.

The U.S. Coast Guard has an enduring role in the Indo-Pacific going back over 150 years. The service's ongoing deployment of resources to the region directly supports U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives in the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the National Security Strategy.

"The United States is a Pacific nation," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area, who was present to see the cutter depart. "We have deep and long-standing ties with our partners in the region, and more importantly, we share a strong commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, governed by a rules-based international system that promotes peace, security, prosperity and sovereignty of all nations."

Bertholf will be operating in support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, which oversees military operations in the region. As part of its planned operations, the cutter will engage in professional exchanges and capacity building with partner nations.

"Security abroad equals security at home," said Fagan. "Enhancing our partners' capabilities is a force multiplier in combating transnational criminal and terrorist organizations and deterring our adversaries."

As both a federal law enforcement agency and an armed force, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to conduct defense operations in support of Combatant Commanders on all seven continents. The service routinely provides forces in joint military operations worldwide, including the deployment of cutters, boats, aircraft and deployable specialized forces.

"I'm excited to see Bertholf sail today to the Indo-Pacific

region of operations,” said Fagan, who described the cutter as one of the most capable in the Coast Guard fleet.

“They will be serving alongside other DoD military forces, particularly the U.S. Navy, and I know they will contribute key capabilities to that mission set. This crew has worked incredibly hard to get ready for today’s sailing, and I can’t think of a better ship and crew to be sending to the Indo-Pacific.”

Commissioned in 2008, Bertholf is the first of the Coast Guard’s Legend-class national security cutters. These advanced ships are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed in excess of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, endurance of up to 90 days and can hold a crew of up to 170.

The Coast Guard is scheduled to commission its seventh national security cutter, Kimball, in 2019. Kimball, along with the Midgett, which is currently under construction, will be homeported in Honolulu and will enhance the Coast Guard’s presence throughout the Indo-Pacific.

“The U.S. Coast Guard’s unique authorities, capabilities, and missions make us the maritime safety and security partner of choice for sea-going countries around the world,” said Capt. John Driscoll, Bertholf’s commanding officer. “Our increased presence throughout the Indo-Pacific will enhance regional stability and improve maritime governance and security.”

In an address to the families and crew before the cutter set sail, Driscoll emphasized how critical family support is to crew wellbeing and readiness.

“Support from our families, wherever they live, is vital to ensuring we are ready to sail and answer the demands of our nation,” Driscoll said. “We must ensure our families are ready to weather the storm at home. We operate in a dangerous and high-consequence environment, and your ability to focus on

mission can become easily compromised if you are worried about family.”

Fagan acknowledged the current lapse in appropriations and government shutdown has added stress and feelings of uncertainty to the typical emotions that surround a cutter departure.

“I know it is hard for these crews to be leaving behind their dependents and spouses – it’s a thousand times more so when everyone is wondering when our next paycheck will be, and how they can support the family they are leaving behind,” Fagan said.

“There has been an incredible outpouring of support for the families here in the Alameda area, but the tension and the anxiety for the crew is real,” said Fagan. “We are standing by to help support those families who are left behind the same way that we are going to support the crew as they sail for the Western Pacific.”

LPD 17 Program Manager: These Ships ‘Can Do Anything’

ARLINGTON, Va. – The San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships (LPD 17s) in production are incorporating improvements as the class progresses to the Flight II configuration, the Navy’s program manager said.

“The mission remains the same,” Capt. Brian Metcalf, the LPD 17 program manager, noted Jan. 16 at the Surface Navy Association symposium of the role of the 14 older Flight I LPDs and the forthcoming Flight II ships.

The Flight II LPD 17 ships, beginning with LPD 30, will incorporate improvements that include the Enterprise Air Search Radar (EASR), Consolidated Afloat Networks and Enterprise Services (CANES) architecture, a destroyer-style mast, boat deck, SLQ-32 Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program Block, and the Rolling Airframe Missile. The Flight II will retain the same hull form and propulsion plant as a Flight I ship but have improved fuel efficiency and electrical distribution. The Flight II will be capable of handling the CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopter.

The future USS Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), a Flight I ship, will be the first LPD to have CANES installed and be fitted with a destroyer-style mast. The ship is scheduled for delivery in fall 2021. Metcalf said CANES will be back-fitted to older ships of the class.

The future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29), the last Flight I ship, will have the EASR installed. The ship is scheduled for delivery in 2023.

The Flight II ships will replace the Navy's eight Whidbey Island-class and four Harpers Ferry-class dock landing ships.

Metcalf said the Flight IIs will be interchangeable with and operate in the same manner as Flight I ships and improve an amphibious ready group's (ARG's) communications, enhancing the ARG's ability to operate in a disaggregated manner, which is more typical of operations in recent years.

"They can do anything," Metcalf said of the San Antonio class, including "recovering spacecraft or put 800 Marines in your back yard."

The 11 commissioned ships of the San Antonio class have completed 21 deployments, he said.

USS Portland (LPD 27) is the next to deploy, departing in 2020. It will have a solid-state laser weapons system

installed.

Metcalf stresses that the LPDs were not just troop carriers, but are combatants built to military specifications.

“They will have to fight to get to the fight,” he said, speaking of the need to operate in a high-threat environment.

The Navy plans to procure 13 Flight II ships. Metcalf said the Navy has the option of a block but not yet the authority for one from the Congress.