

Navy Funds Development of New Sonobuoy to Track Quiet Submarines



Gunner's Mate Seaman Tyrell Christman, from Waco, Texas, holds a sonobuoy aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Pinckney (DDG 91) Nov. 23, 2019. The Navy is seeking a new type of sonobuoy that is harder to detect. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Erick A. Parsons

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy is developing a new sonobuoy to enhance its ability to track newer and quieter submarines, according to a July 20 Defense Department contract announcement.

The Office of Naval Research has awarded Undersea Signal Systems Inc. of Columbia City, Indiana, a \$28.3 million cost-plus-fixed-fee-contract “to develop a prototype sonobuoy, known as Extended Range Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording (ER-DIFAR), to address new and quiet threat submarine targets.”

Sonobuoys are deployed by Navy P-8A, P-3C and MH-60R aircraft to acoustically detect and track submarines. They are expendable sensors that float on the surface of the water and extend a hydrophone to depths to collect sound from submarine propulsion systems, auxiliary machinery and other sources of sound from a submarine.

Passive sonobuoys, such as the SSQ-53 DIFAR (Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording) sonobuoys were a staple of Cold War antisubmarine operations because they were able to detect and point to the sounds from a submarine. As Soviet and later Russian submarines improved in their acoustic quieting, the DIFAR sonobuoy became less effective. The Navy then turned

to emphasized active tracking sonobuoys such as the SSQ-125 sonobuoy, which used a sound source to “ping” a submarine, but also revealed to a submarine that it was being tracked.

A new extended-range DIFAR sonobuoy would increase the ability to passively track quieter submarines.

The contract for the DIFAR-ER is a three-year base contract with a one-year option. Work is expected to be completed by July 2024.

Navy Orders 6 More Enterprise Air-Search Radars



The U.S. Navy has ordered six more Raytheon EASRs for its SPY-6 radar, which were outfitted on DDG-51 Arleigh Burke destroyers earlier this year. U.S. NAVY

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has ordered six more Enterprise Air Search Radars (EASRs) from Raytheon Missiles and Defense, the Defense Department said in a July 17 release.

The Naval Sea Systems Command has awarded Raytheon Missiles and Defense of Marlborough, Massachusetts, a \$125.9 million fixed-price, incentive fee modification to a previously awarded to exercise options for the six low-rate initial production units.

The six units include four SPY-6(V)2 rotator versions and two SPY-6(V)3 fixed-faced versions. These versions are scaled-down versions of the SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar being installed on the Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-

missile destroyers.

The AN/SPY-6(V)2 EASR rotator units will be deployed on the amphibious assault ship USS Bougainville (LHA 8), the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), the last Flight I San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) and the first Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship USS Harrisburg (LPD 30), respectively.

The two SPY-6(V)3 EASR fixed-faced units will be deployed on the Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) and the first ship of the new FFG(X) guided-missile frigates.

Work is expected to be completed by January 2023.

DoD to Send \$22M to Rolls-Royce to Strengthen Shipbuilding Industrial Base

ARLINGTON, Va. – As part of the national response to COVID-19, the Defense Department entered into a \$22 million agreement with Rolls-Royce to maintain, protect and expand critical domestic productive capacity for propellers essential to U.S. Navy shipbuilding programs, the department said in a Jul 17 release. These projects will begin in July 2020 and help meet increasing demand across the vitally important shipbuilding sector of the defense industrial base.

Using funds authorized and appropriated under the CARES Act, this DPA Title III investment will protect and create jobs in

the Gulf Coast region hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure critical capabilities are retained in support of U.S. Navy operational readiness.

Rolls-Royce intends to expand its existing facility in Pascagoula, Mississippi, to install a number of state-of-the-art machine tools to support production of propellers for all shipbuilding programs, reduce production risks and increase throughput. These investments will have long-term benefits for the U.S. Navy and the Gulf Coast region.

Over the next 36 months, the \$22 million government investment will sustain and expand critical domestic industrial base capability for propeller machining capacity. The Rolls-Royce Foundry will continue to be one of only two facilities capable of supplying the U.S. Navy with this capacity.

The Rolls-Royce Foundry in Pascagoula is the principal place of performance.

CNO Launches Inquiries Into Bonhomme Richard Blaze



The USS Bonhomme Richard sits scorched pierside at Naval Base San Diego on July 17, after four days of fire severely damaged the amphibious assault ship and investigations into the cause and procedures in battling the blaze got underway. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communications Specialist 3rd Class Jason Waite

ARLINGTON, Va. — Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday announced a series of investigations into the disastrous fire that severely damaged the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in San Diego this week.

Following a July 17 tour of the damage aboard the ship, Gilday held a press conference in the afternoon to discuss the events and to praise the ship's crew and the hundreds of other firefighters from other vessels and fire departments that came to the aid of the Bonhomme Richard, the sixth ship of the Wasp class.

Gilday said there would be a safety investigation to determine the cause of the fire and any ancillary issues in the realm of safety. This investigation, to be conducted by Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), will be kept confidential to allow for free flow of testimony.

A second investigation, also routine in such incidents, will be conducted by the Navy Criminal Investigative Service, to determine if the fire was caused by any malfeasance or criminal activity, the CNO announced.

Gilday said the Navy also will conduct a third investigation that will look into several echelons of command to determine if the correct procedures were in effect during the emergency, if the Navy reacted properly to the fire, and if measures should have been in place that were not, among other factors.

"Make no mistake," the CNO said. "We will follow the facts of what happened here. We will be honest with ourselves. We will get after it as a Navy."

He also said the ship's structure will be assessed, as will any mechanical and electrical damage, so the Navy can determine whether the amphib can be repaired. Experts from the ship's builder, Huntington Ingalls Industries, will be involved in the assessment, as will those of NAVSEA and Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

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Gilday said four-star fleet commanders will send detailed messages to all ships in all fleets, mandating that within five days their commanding officers assess personnel training levels, see if equipment is adequately operable – “in terms of placement and in terms of numbers” – and to “red-team” their procedures “to make sure they’re adequate.”

“I am 100% confident that our defense industry can put this ship back to sea, but, having said that, the question is, ‘should we make that investment in a 22-year-old ship?’” he said. “I’m not going to make any predictions until we take a look at all of the facts, and we follow the facts, and we can make a reasonable recommendation on the future steps.”

Gilday inspected the damage to the Bonhomme Richard down to four decks below the flight deck and up to the superstructure and spoke to many of the firefighters. He was told that the wind coming off the bay helped the fire spread out of control, up elevator shafts and into the ship’s exhaust stacks.

There also were a series of explosions – one of which could be heard 13 miles away – that led the ship’s CO to withdraw firefighters for their safety. At one point, an explosion blew debris across the pier to another ship, Gilday said.

“I think that the situation was very tenuous,” he said. “I think that the commanding officer made some very sound decisions in terms of how to attack the fire very deliberately.”

The fires, which started on the morning of July 12, burned for four days. The amphib, which is based in San Diego, was being upgraded to operate F-35B Lightning II strike fighters, among other modernizations.

Navy Arctic Expert Suggests a Fleet to Encompass Arctic Domain



Sailors assigned to the fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut stand watch on the bridge after surfacing in the Arctic Circle during Ice Exercise 2020 in March. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Michael B. Zingaro ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. interests in the Arctic Ocean and its connections to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans might be better served as a dedicated fleet's area of responsibility, rather than divided between the U.S. 2nd, 3rd and 6th Fleets, a Navy expert on the Arctic said.

Dr. Walter Berbrick, associate professor at the Naval War College and director of its Arctic Studies Group, was speaking July 16 during a webinar, Arctic East vs West: US Strategy in the Atlantic and Pacific Arctic, sponsored by CNA, a think tank in Arlington.

Berbrick said the lessened ice coverage of the Arctic Ocean is inviting to nations seeking to reduce maritime transit time between continents, especially considering that maritime commerce is expected to double over the next 20 years.

The Northern Sea Route along the Russian northern shoreline cuts 40% of the transit distance between Europe and the Far East, a route of considerable interest to China. The Northwest Passage, between the Bering Strait by Alaska and the Davis Strait by Greenland, is less viable, given the shallowness of the water and the narrow straits. More attractive, should the ice melt more, is the Transpolar Route, directly across the

geographic North Pole from any direction, so far navigable only by submarines.

He said the current forecast of when the Transpolar Route might be navigable for surface ships by anywhere between 2035 and 2050 out to 2060.

“How do we posture our forces to keep Arctic sea lines of communication free and open? What kind of naval power do we need [to] project from the Arctic to potentially gain an advantage in other places like the Pacific and the Atlantic?”

Dr. Walter Berbrick, associate professor, Naval War College, and director of its Arctic Studies Group

He noted that Russia is increasing its military presence in the Arctic region with modernizing old air bases, installing air-defense missile batteries, increasing submarine activity and building polar icebreakers armed with cruise missiles.

Berbrick said the heart of China's Arctic strategy is use of the Arctic sea routes and gaining access to ports in northern Europe for maritime commerce. He said China's increasing naval deployments away from home waters are likely to extend to the Arctic regions eventually, including Chinese subs making transits to the North Pole.

Regarding U.S. policy toward Arctic presence, Berbrick said the U.S. Coast Guard has done more than any other service to step up and dominate the discussion, but that this also means closer integration between the Coast Guard and U.S. Navy in the Arctic.

“What capabilities do we need to deter and, if necessary, to respond to any military by any nation or navy?” Berbrick asked rhetorically. “What forces do we need to assure our allies and partners in the region? How do we posture our forces to keep Arctic sea lines of communication free and open? What kind of

naval power do we need [in the region] project from the Arctic to potentially gain an advantage in other places like the Pacific and the Atlantic?”

He noted that the U.S. Navy is designed for high-end fighting in warm waters.

The Navy also would need days or weeks to respond to a crisis in the Arctic, he said, given the distance from U.S. deep-water ports.

The 2nd, 3rd and 6th Fleets all have responsibilities in the region, he noted, with the Navy “facing a time/space/force problem in the Arctic,” with too many other challenges around the world.

“Perhaps we should think outside the box and create a new fleet, an Arctic fleet,” Berbrick said, saying that a total Navy battle fleet sized more toward 400 ships rather than 355 would be needed, which would allow for a fleet “permanently spread out across the Arctic region.”

He said the supporting shore structure would require reactivating old bases in the Aleutian Islands and Greenland and establishing a port in Nome, Alaska, for example, he said.

MCPON: Some Responses to Pandemic Will Remain as Good Processes



Hospitalman Tkatherzline Blackwell conducts a temperature check at the entrance of Branch Health Clinic at Naval Air

Facility Atsugi, Japan. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob Smith

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's top enlisted leader said the COVID-19 pandemic is teaching the sea service that personnel need as much focus as machines as the Navy works its way to separate processes that work from those that need to be cast aside.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Russell Smith spoke July 15 during a webinar, NatSec 2020: Coronavirus and Beyond, co-sponsored by the Navy League of the United States, the Association of the United States Army and Government Matters.

"We knew going in that we were going to find some better practices, some efficiencies with the way we do business," Smith said.

He noted that the Navy's recruit training center at Great Lakes, Illinois, "has had [fewer] cases of pneumonia, severe flu and hospitalizations than we've ever had right now, even in COVID, because of the way we've handled people and the way we've prevented that inter-exchange of colds and things that all happen when so many people from so many different parts of the country all come together and start sharing their germs."

"The way we handled things from a hygiene perspective and some other efficiencies that we certainly learned in this process of bringing [recruits] in will probably stick," he said.

"That's the COVID writ large for us as a Navy," he said. "We've absolutely learned some things that we stopped doing because of COVID that we probably won't start doing again. Some things we'll have to go right back to doing as soon as we can, but there are some things – by not having to do them for a while – as an efficiency, we probably don't need to go back to doing [them]."

"Where there is challenge, there is opportunity," said Navy

League Executive Director Mike Stevens, Smith's predecessor as MCPON, also speaking in the webinar. "What I've seen in both the private sector and in [the Department of Defense] taking the challenge, looking for these new opportunities, and, primarily where we capitalize on these opportunities in the areas of technology, I think those thing are going to stick."

"We've learned how to work efficiently from places other than our normal places of duty or work," Stevens said. "We're much more effective than I thought we would be."

Smith pointed out that the Navy is an expeditionary service, "and when we immediately moved to nearly everyone teleworking, we found out how much our basic services lack the agility that they require for us to dis-aggregate and work remotely. We have to be able to do that far better than we do today. A lot of these forced processes made us catch up quickly."

All Known Fires Extinguished Aboard Bonhomme Richard



An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter provides aerial firefighting support to fight the fire aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Julio Rivera

ARLINGTON, Va. – Firefighters have extinguished all known fires on the amphibious assault USS Bonhomme Richard in San Diego, the Navy announced.

"Our fire teams are investigating every space to verify the absence of fire," Rear Adm. Philip E. Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, said in a 1 p.m.

Pacific time statement.

“Until every space is checked and there are no active fires we will not be able to commence any official investigations. We did not know the origin of the fire. We do not know the extent of the damage. It is too early to make any predictions or promises of what the future of the ship will be. We cannot make any conclusions, until the investigation is complete.”

Some reports outside the Navy indicated the fires were the result of an explosion aboard.

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Rear Adm. Philip E. Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3

The fires, which started on the morning of July 12, burned for four days and have severely damaged the ship, the sixth ship of the Wasp class. The ship, based in San Diego, was being upgraded to operate F-35B Lightning II strike fighters, among other modernizations.

Sobeck said that 63 personnel – 40 U.S. Navy Sailors and 23 civilians – were treated for minor injuries such as heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation. None remain hospitalized.

“What we do know is that brave Sailors from commands all across San Diego worked tirelessly alongside Federal Firefighters to get this fire extinguished and I want to thank them for their efforts,” he said. “This was a Navy team effort. We had support from the air and sea. Three helicopter squadrons conducted more than 1,500 water bucket drops, fighting the fire and cooling the super structure and flight deck enabling fire crews to get onboard to fight the fire. Tugs also provided firefighting support from the waterline,

cooling the ship's hull.

"The Navy continues to work together with regulators, county and state in protecting our environment and preparing to address the community's concerns as we move forward to the next phase," he said. "I'd like to thank our partners from state and county, the U.S. Coast Guard, and all agencies for continued support."

Geurts: Navy Acquisition Pivoted Rapidly to Face the Pandemic



Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Gage Bounds, assigned to the engineering department aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, grinds a door to prepare it for welding at Newport News Shipyard. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Robert Stamer

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's top procurement official said he seeks to maintain the agility and efficiencies garnered by the Navy's acquisition and repair workforce and procedures long after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

The pandemic is a "really good test of resilience and how dynamic your organization is," said James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, who spoke on July 15 during a webinar, NatSec 2020: Coronavirus and Beyond, co-sponsored by the Navy League of the United States, the Association of the United States Army and Government Matters.

“What we’ve been working on for the last couple years of decentralizing, differentializing, digitizing the work and developing talent, in hindsight, is very important,” Geurts said in response to questions from the Navy League’s executive director, Mike Stevens. “It gave us a really sound foundation to pivot. I’ve been really impressed how fast we’ve been able to pivot. The Navy, at least in acquisition channels, has been accelerating through the crisis.”

Geurts said the Navy is about 37% ahead in contract awards this year compared with the same period in 2019 and twice what was done by this time in 2018 – having awarded an additional \$30 billion to \$35 billion in contracts in motion in the middle of the crisis. He said the effort created stability and freed up bandwidth to deal with things that pop up.

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James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition

He said the pandemic has “re-taught us the value of resilience as the core attribute to an organization.”

The assistant secretary said the Navy had been planning how to surge in the event of a security crisis and, when the pandemic hit, the “art of planning for a crisis allowed us to pivot in a really strong way.”

He credited “empowering the workforce by massively decentralizing” as a key to success, “showing the workforce that, ‘Hey, we trust you, your decision-making, we’re going to empower you to make decisions.’”

Geurts said he wants to preserve the momentum developed by his

workforce beyond the pandemic.

“Going back to where we were, as good as that was, is mission failure,” he said. “The fact that we were able to get 37% more efficiency in a crisis, I want to capture that efficiency ... so that we’ve got both performance improvement and more resilience as we go forward. ... We should get better at leading through disruption.”

Geurts said no shipyards or repair yards – public or private – have been shut down during the pandemic.

“To think that we had 100,000-plus shipyard workers continuously operating through the crisis is a pretty remarkable state of leadership,” he said. “We’ve had some delays, some disruption, some loss of productive work hours – which we’re going to have to manage our way through, and we’re working our way through that – but we never got to the point where we had to completely shut down.”

The Navy recently mobilized 1,600 Reservists to shore up the shipyards during the pandemic. And Geurts noted that the Navy has not slowed down its deployments or overseas presence during the pandemic.

Firefighters Still Working to Save Bonhomme Richard



A group of Sailors departs the pier after supporting firefighting efforts aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard on July 15. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Natalie M. Byers

ARLINGTON, Va. – The firefighting efforts to save the

amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in San Diego carried over into a fifth day on July 16.

Just after midnight, early in the morning, the work of firefighting teams had to be temporarily halted, the Navy reported.

“Out of an abundance of caution the pier and ship were cleared of personnel due to an initial shift in the ship’s list,” Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, said in a release. “Personnel are now pierside. We will continue to monitor as the ship settles.”

As of 6 a.m. Pacific time, the firefighting teams were continuing operations on board the ship, according to the Navy. The total personnel treated for minor injuries remained 63 – 40 Sailors and 23 civilians. The fires were reportedly caused by an explosion, but the Navy has not officially disclosed a cause.

Navy League VP Kaskin: More Tankers Needed to Support a Pacific War



Gunner’s Mate 2nd Class Joshua Davis fires a shot-line aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Hamilton during a replenishment-at-sea with the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Walter S Diehl on July 8. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Matthew F. Jackson

ARLINGTON, Va. – The United States needs a larger merchant fleet, including ships available for sealift and tankers to

meet the challenges of the new era of “great power competition,” particularly a conflict in the Pacific, said a senior Navy League of the United States official.

Jonathan Kaskin, who spoke July 14 during a webinar, NatSec 2020: Coronavirus and Beyond, co-sponsored by the Navy League, the Association of the United States Army and Government Matters, said the “fleet itself just needs to grow.”

Kaskin, a former Navy logistics official, said “we in the Navy League would like to ... advocate for a much larger Merchant Marine in order to support the tenets of the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, which says that we should have a [merchant] fleet large enough to support not only our domestic trade but a portion of our international trade to be able to maintain our commerce at all time in peace and war. I don’t think we have adequate capability in both areas right now.”

Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby, a retired Navy admiral and former commander of Military Sealift Command (MSC), also spoke during the webinar.

“We need more ships,” Buzby said, noting that about 50 more vessels are needed for sealift; 87 U.S.-flag international-trading cargo ships (of which 60 are enrolled in MARAD’s Maritime Security Program, a stipend paid to keep ships available for sealift), available for mobilization for military use; and 99 large Jones Act ships.

Buzby said that the nation’s Merchant Mariner workforce is short about 1,800 personnel for a sustained sealift mission.

He said he prefers to have more commercial ships operating rather than Reserve ships tied up at the pier, because they would be more ready and would have trained mariners already on board and qualified.

Kaskin said that there are two ways to grow the merchant fleet, one being an expansion of the Maritime Security

Program. The other is a MARAD proposal to create a Tanker Security Program “to help mitigate a shortfall of tankers required to support a war in the Pacific.”

He said only six U.S.-flag international trade tankers are available for use by the military – and three of those are already leased by the Navy to support current operations.

“The requirement that U.S. Transportation Command has shown – and earlier studies have shown – that we need more than 78 tankers. Adding 10 is not going to be sufficient,” he said. “So, what we really need to do is find ways of utilizing the tankers that we have in the domestic fleet – the Jones Act [ships] – to be able to support wartime operations.”