NAVAIR Orders 80 Blackjack, 93 ScanEagle UAVs

U.S. Marines with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163 (Reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) aboard the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26), prepare to launch an RQ-21A Blackjack in March 2019. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Israel Chincio

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded a contract for Blackjack and ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicles for the Navy and Marine Corps and several foreign nations.

Insitu Inc. of Bingen, Washington, was awarded by the Naval Air Systems Command a $390.1 million firm-fixed-price, indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract for up to 63 RQ-21A [Blackjack] attrition air vehicles for the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy," a June 28 Defense Department announcement said. "In addition, this contract provides for up to six RQ-21A unmanned aircraft systems and up to 17 RQ-21A air vehicles for foreign military sales customers, including the governments of Canada, Poland and Oman."

Insitu also will also provide up to 93 ScanEagle UASs in various configurations, the announcement said. "In addition, this contract provides for associated services, including training, test and engineering,

development of engineering
change proposals, operations support, organizational level maintenance, field
service representatives, land and ship surveys, hardware site activations,
hardware installs, repairs, and data.”

The RQ-21A
Blackjack has seen service as a surveillance platform with the Marine Corps in
Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya. Contractor-owned and operated ScanEagles
have operated in support of U.S. and partner nations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
The ScanEagle also has be operated by U.S. Special Operations command and by
several foreign nations.

The orders
are expected to be completed by June 2022.

Littoral Combat Ship Deploys to WestPac, Ending 18-Month Gap

Lt. Thomas Cummings, assigned to the Independence-class littoral combat ship USS Montgomery (LCS 8), communicates with the Philippine Navy from the ship’s bridge as Montgomery arrives in Davao City for a scheduled port visit. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Tristin Barth
ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy has deployed a littoral combat

ship to the Western Pacific for the first time in 18 months, the first of three LCSs the service plans to deploy this year.

The first LCS deployment this year apparently was kept quiet by the Navy until the service published a July 1 web article by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Greg Johnson of commander, Logistics Force, Western Pacific/CTF 73 Public Affairs, of the Independence-class USS Montgomery (LCS 8) making a port call in Davao, Philippines, on June 29.

The last LCS to deploy, USS Coronado (LCS 4), returned from the Western Pacific on Dec. 5, 2017. It had been preceded by the USS Freedom (LCS 1) and its Freedom-class sister ship, USS Fort Worth (LCS 3), in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

The commander of Naval Surface Forces told reporters in a Jan. 11 teleconference that LCS deployments would resume in 2019, saying that the Independence-class LCSs USS Montgomery and USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) would deploy from the West Coast and that the first LCS deployments from the East Coast, departing from Naval Station Mayport, Florida, would be undertaken by the Freedom-variant LCS USS Detroit (LCS 7), followed by sister ship USS Little Rock (LCS 9) in 2020.

For all of these deployments, the ships will carry the full surface warfare mission package, Brown said.

“It’s happening,” Brown said during the teleconference,

noting that from then on “there will always be LCS forward-deployed.”

Senator: SECNAV ‘Gets It’ on Importance of Arctic

WASHINGTON –
Alaska’s junior senator, a member of the Armed Services Committee, is critical
of the Pentagon’s lack of support for a strategic Arctic port but is pleased
that the nation has a Secretary of the Navy who understands the need for the
Navy to have the infrastructure to sustain a presence in the Arctic region.

“The good
news is having a Secretary of the Navy who gets it and is an advocate,” said
Sen. Dan Sullivan, chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management
Support on the Senate Armed Services Committee, speaking June 26 on Arctic
defense issues to an audience at the Center for Strategic and International
Studies, a Washington think tank, noting that Congress, not the Defense
Department, is usually driving the efforts to strengthen U.S. strategic presence
in the Arctic.

Sullivan,

also a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve, said he was concerned about Russian hegemony in the Arctic, noting that Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the Arctic is “the new Suez Canal that Russia will control,” and that Russia is devoting four of six new brigade combat teams to the Arctic region.

He noted that Russia fields 40 icebreakers and is building 13 more, while the Coast Guard has only one heavy icebreaker. He is pleased that the Congress has authorized six icebreakers, including three polar security cutters (PSCs), and has funded the first PSC and made a down payment of a second.

Sullivan said the Navy will be sending one or two guided-missile destroyers along with Coast Guard assets to the Arctic this summer and in September will be conducting exercises from the former naval air station on Adak, an Aleutian island, as well as operating P-8 maritime patrol aircraft from Adak for part of the year.

The Arm Corps of Engineers is studying the challenges of building a strategic port at Nome, Alaska, he said.

He pointed out that the Navy currently does not have the capability to conduct freedom of navigation operations in the Arctic, noting that submarines, being covert under

the ice, do not count as a ‘presence.’

Sullivan also
said the Navy needs to consider ice-hardening some future ships.

“I’m very
supportive of a 355-ship Navy, but we need to look at the Navy and we’ve had
this in the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] for the Secretary of the
Navy to look, the ice-hardening capabilities of some of that new fleet that
we’re building, so we have a lot of work to do and we’re way behind with regard
to capabilities, particularly on the Navy side, the strategic Arctic port side,”
he said.

First Marine F-35C Squadron Retires its Hornets

The first Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 “Black Knights” F-35C aircraft from Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore flies in formation over the Sierra Nevada mountains with a VFMA-314 squadron F/A-18A++. U.S. Navy/Lt. Cmdr. Darin Russell ARLINGTON,
Va. — The Marine Corps’ first operational squadron to fly the F-35C
carrier-capable version of the Lightning II joint strike fighter has retired
its last F/A-18 Hornet strike fighter.

In ceremonies held June 21 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 (VMFA-314) retired its last Hornet, an F/A-18A++ version.
The Black Knights, as the squadron is known, are now in transition to the F-35C at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, under the tutelage of the Navy's F-35C replacement training squadron, VFA-125.

The Marine Corps flies both the short-takeoff/vertical landing F-35B version and the F-35C aircraft carrier version. The Corps currently fields three operational F-35B squadrons, VMFA-121, -211, and -122.

The Corps is procuring 67 F-35Cs to equip squadrons that will deploy with Navy carrier air wings. In recent years the Corps has assigned two VMFA F/A-18 squadrons to deploy with carrier air wings.

Navy Frigate Manager: Practices Reducing Acquisition Timeline By 6

Years

WASHINGTON –
A disciplined set of practices by the U.S. Navy's frigate program office
enabled the planned acquisition timeline for the new ship to be shortened by
six years over what a new warship normally might have taken.

Regan Campbell, program manager for the FFG(X) guided-missile frigate
program, speaking June 20 in Washington at the Technology, Systems and Ships
Symposium of the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE), said the practices
wouldn't necessarily work in all acquisitions but the frigate program became a
proving ground for early engagement with industry and setting clear
requirements.

Campbell said the program office leveraged previous analyses of
alternatives to accelerate the process and set the stage for clear shipbuilder
requirements. The requirement for bidders to use a parent ship design as a
basis for their proposals greatly shortened the timeline, avoiding the need for
a "clean-sheet" design. A parallel requirements evaluation process instead of a
serial process also saved some time.

By design, the frigate will make use of command mature
government-furnished equipment (GFE), particularly weapons, sensors and combat
systems that already have been developed but will contribute

to cost savings by being common with systems on other classes of ships.

Use of GFE, Campbell said, “allows us to shorten our combat systems integration time.”

Early engagement with industry also saved time and produced ideas for the program. Campbell said the Frigate Affordability Board received more than 350 ideas to modify the ship specifications and the Capabilities Definition Document.

“We accepted over 60% of the industry ideas,” Campbell said.

The Navy released the Request for Proposals for the FFG(X) on June 20.

Four companies are expected to submit bids for the FFG(X) program: Huntington Ingalls, Fincantieri Marine, General Dynamics Bath Iron Works and Austal USA. The builder of the Freedom-class littoral combat ship, Lockheed Martin, participated in the program until recently but dropped out. The competition is open to other bidders that can meet the requirements.

Marine Corps Awards BAE

Systems Contract to Develop ACV Mission Variants

Marine Corps Systems Command awarded a contract to BAE Systems to produce and deliver the Amphibious Combat Vehicle.

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has awarded BAE Systems a contract to develop two variants of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) and manufacture one of them.

Marine Corps Systems Command has awarded "a not-to-exceed [$67 million] modification for firm-fixed-price, cost-plus-fixed-fee contract for the development of engineering drawings, manufacture and test support for three [ACV] command-and-control Mission Role Variants (MRVs) and the development of engineering drawings for the ACV medium-caliber-cannon MRV," according to a Defense Department release.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzPcMB_9Ic0

BAE Systems is building the ACV for the Marine Corps as an amphibious troop carrier to replace the four-decade-old Assault Amphibious Vehicle. The AAV7 is fielded in several variants, and the Corps plans to field the ACV in variants as well.

The command-and-control (C2) MRV will be the first variant of the ACV. The C2 variant will be designed for a commander and staff and

equipped with computer displays and communications systems to enable the commander to maintain situational awareness of the battlefield.

A variant with a medium-caliber gun atop the ACV will follow.

Work is expected to be completed by Sept. 30, 2022.

CNO: Technological Readiness for War 'Not a Pick-Up Thing'

WASHINGTON – The Navy's top officer told a gathering of naval engineers and industry officials that being technologically ready for war is not something that can be achieved overnight but is the result of diligent experimentation and keeping pace with one's adversary.

"The technological landscape is changing so fast, across all of technology, really fueled by this information revolution that we're in the middle of right now," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson said, speaking June 20 in Washington at the Technology, Systems and Ships Symposium of the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE).

“We really do need to move apace, but what we rely on – groups like naval engineers and ASNE – is to make sure that as we do that we move forward not on hope, not on magazine articles, not on predictions, but move forward based on solid engineering.

> *“We really do need to move apace, but what we rely on – groups like naval engineers and ASNE – is to make sure that as we do that we move forward not on hope, not on magazine articles, not on predictions, but move forward based on solid engineering.”*
>
> *Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson*

“This is the challenge. We’ve got to move forward on an evidence-based approach.”

Technological agility was a quality Richardson stressed as necessary to keep up with evolving threats.

Richardson said that the supremacy of U.S. naval aviation after the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor crippled the U.S. battleships was not a rapid development but the result of 20 years of innovation and hard work by the fleet and such visionaries as Rear Adm. William Moffett and Adm. Joseph Mason Reeves.

“This was not something we did as a pick-up team on Dec. 8,” Richardson said. “We had evidence, a lot of experimentation, a lot of

engineering going into that, so that force [naval aviation] was truly ready to take on that new mission, that new role, and it wasn't just a pick-up thing overnight."

"This is the way we have to move forward," he said. "We have to continue to get out there, experiment, prototype, get that evidence that these new technologies are ready to carry on and take on the responsibility for the security of our nation.

"And we have to do that at pace. We do not want to be the second Navy armed with these decisive technologies – directed energy, unmanned, machine learning, artificial intelligence, etc. … This is a human challenge at the end of the day."

Missile That Brought Down Navy Global Hawk UAV Shot From Iranian Surface-to-Air System

A RQ-4A Block 10 Global Hawk UAV similar to the one that was shot down June 19 by Iranian forces. Northrup Grumman

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy RQ-4A Block 10 Global Hawk

unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) shot down June 19 by Iranian forces was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile of indigenous Iranian design and manufacture.

The Global Hawk was downed by a missile system the Iranians call the Third of Khordad, which was first unveiled in Iran in 2014. The system's missile has a range of 75 kilometers and can intercept targets at an altitude of up to 81,000 feet, higher than the 60,000-foot ceiling of the Global Hawk.

One former Navy electronic countermeasures officer described the Third of Khordad as a knock-off of the Russian-designed BUK-M1 (NATO code name SA-11 Gadfly) missile system.

> *The incident occurred a few days after Iranian forces fired a missile at a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper UAV near the Strait of Hormuz and damaged two oil tankers with limpet mines.*

In a June 20 release, U.S. Central Command spokesman Cmdr. Bill Urban said the RQ-4A was shot down "while operating in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz at approximately 11:35 p.m. GMT on June 19, 2019. Iranian reports that the aircraft was over Iran are false. This was an unprovoked attack on a U.S. surveillance asset in international airspace."

Iran claimed the UAV had violated Iranian airspace.

The incident occurred a few days after Iranian forces fired a missile at a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper UAV near the Strait of Hormuz and damaged

two oil tankers with limpet mines. Last month, four tankers were damaged by explosives believed to be limpet mines.

The Northrop Grumman RQ-4A Block 10 Global Hawk high-altitude long-endurance (HALE) UAV also is known as the BAMS-D (Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance-Demonstration) system. Urban said the RQ-4A "provides real-time intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions over vast ocean and coastal regions."

The Navy has deployed the RQ-4A to Southwest Asia since 2009 as a component of the Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance-Demonstration (BAMS-D) program. Five RQ-4As were acquired from the U.S. Air Force and were based at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, and operated by a detachment of Patrol Reconnaissance Wing 11. The detachment keeps at least one RQ-4A in the rotation to a base in the Persian Gulf region. One was lost in a mishap in Maryland in June 2012.

The Navy and Northrop Grumman have been developing a Global Hawk derivative, the MQ-4C Triton, to meet the Navy's HALE requirements. Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 is scheduled to send a two-aircraft detachment to Guam this year for the Triton's Early Operational Capability deployment. The deployment had been delayed a year following the gear-up landing of one of the squadron's MQ-4Cs in September 2018.

According to news reports, one MQ-4C recently had been deployed to Southwest Asia as part of the U.S. buildup of forces in response to Iranian hostile acts. The deployment initially led to some erroneous reports that the downed UAV was an MQ-4C.

Navy Admiral: A Stable Shipbuilding Era, But New Opportunities on the Horizon

WASHINGTON –
The admiral in charge of building the Navy's surface ships said the construction programs are tracking well and that the service is gearing up for some new platforms, including unmanned surface ships.

"We are in an era of stable design," said Rear Adm. William Galinis, program executive officer for ships, speaking June 18 in Washington at the Technology, Systems and Ships Symposium of the American Society of Naval Engineers. "As we look forward, on the surface side, some new opportunities are on the horizon."

Galinis was referring to stable designs such as the Arleigh Burke DDG 51 Flight IIA and III programs, the San Antonio-class LPD 17 program, the Tripoli LHA 7 – which will have full capability for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter – and the Virginia-class attack submarine.

Ship programs

on the horizon he mentioned are the new FFG(X) guided-missile frigate, the Large Surface Combatant, and unmanned surface vessels.

Galinis said the Large Surface Combatant is likely to benefit from lessons learned through the DDG 1000 Zumwalt-class destroyer program.

“We’re learning a ton off of that platform,” he said, noting the integrated power system and low-observable signature of the ship, among other aspects, and that signature requirements “really does drive up cost.”

He said that use of mature technology will keep cost down on the Large Surface Combatant.

“Not to predispose anything, but I think in the end, you know, it’s probably going to look a lot more like DDG 1000 than DDG 51 if I had to say so,” Galinis said, noting that a lot of work remained to be done.

He also praised the use in shipbuilding of land-based test sites, which, he said, “buy us a lot once we get into construction.”

Also speaking with Galinis was Rear Adm. Lorin Selby, the chief engineer and deputy chief of staff for ship design, integration and naval engineering at Naval Sea Systems Command.

Selby sees

the new classes of ships coming in the next era of shipbuilding as an
“opportunity for us to reset on the way we do business at NAVSEA.”

He stressed
that the Navy needs to build up its talent base in ship design and engineering
as development proceeds on new classes of ships and submarines and needs to
space the workload so that the work force can be sustained as ship design work
comes and goes.

New Pentagon $250 Million Aid to Ukraine Includes Naval Support

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Defense Department’s plans to provide additional security cooperation aid to Ukraine includes unspecified support for
Ukraine’s navy and naval infantry, the Pentagon said in a release.

DoD said it would provide $250 million in security cooperation funds to Ukraine “for additional training, equipment and advisory
efforts to build the capacity of Ukraine’s armed forces.”

The security assistance funds will bring the total given to Ukraine to $1.5 billion since 2014.

“The new funds will provide equipment to support ongoing training programs and operational needs, including capabilities to enhance:
maritime situational awareness and operations as part of ongoing U.S. efforts
to increase support for Ukraine’s navy and naval infantry; the defensive
capacity and survivability of Ukraine’s land and special operations forces
through the provision of sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and
counter-artillery radars; command and control; electronic warfare detection and
secure communications; military mobility; night vision; and, military medical
treatment,” according to the June 18 release.

DoD said the funding “is made possible by Ukraine’s continued progress on the adoption of key defense institutional reforms to align Ukraine’s national security architecture with Euro-Atlantic principles.

“The United States remains committed to helping Ukraine implement provisions of Ukraine’s 2018 Law on National Security to strengthen democratic civilian control of the military, promote command and control reforms, enhance transparency and accountability in acquisition and budgeting, and advance defense industry reforms. These reforms will bolster Ukraine’s ability to defend its territorial integrity in support of a secure, prosperous, democratic and free Ukraine.”