Navy Orders Five Ospreys from Bell-Boeing

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has ordered five more V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft under a modification to a multiyear contract.

Naval Air Systems Command awarded to Bell Boeing a $367 modification for five Ospreys on Dec. 28, an addition to a $4.2 billion contract for 78 Ospreys awarded on June 28.

Under the new order, Bell Boeing will deliver three CMV-22B carrier-onboard-delivery aircraft for the Navy and two MV-22B assault transport aircraft for the Marine Corps by October 2023.

The Ospreys ordered in June include 39 CMV-22Bs for the Navy, 34 MV-22Bs for the Marine Corps, one CV-22B for the Air Force and four MV-22Bs for the government of Japan.

CNO: U.S. 2nd, 3rd Fleets to Become Expeditionary

ARLINGTON, Va. – Two of the Navy's U.S.-based numbered fleets will become expeditionary, backed up at home by their respective training carrier strike groups (CSGs), the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John Richardson aid. The move is a reflection on the need to increase the agility of naval forces in a return of an era of peer competitors.

The initiative is one of the CNO's goals in an updated version, 2.0, of his document "A Design for Maritime Security.

“Commander, 2nd Fleet (C2F) and Commander, 3rd Fleet (C3F) will be expeditionary: they will have the capability to command and control their forces while deployed forward,” the CNO said in the document.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, established in August to operate in the North Atlantic Ocean, is expected to reach full operational capability in 2019.

As a backstop for sustaining training of the fleet’s units in their at-home cycles, the fleets’ respective carrier strike group staffs in charge of fleet work-ups will be charged with building up deploying forces while the fleet staffs are deployed.

“In order to retain the capability for force generation while C2F and/or C3F are deployed, Carrier Strike Group (CSG)-4 and CSG-15 will develop the capability and capacity to generate forces, reporting directly to Commander, Fleet Forces Command, and Commander, Pacific Fleet, respectively,” the document said.

CNO’s Revised ‘Design for Maintaining Maritime Security’ Pushes Columbia SSBN Schedule

ARLINGTON, Va. — The chief of naval operations (CNO) is pushing to accelerate the development of the Navy’s next-generation ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) so that it is ready to deploy “as quickly as possible.” He also is pushing

the more rapid acquisition timeline of new ships, aircraft, weapons, and networks.

In the new “Version 2.0” of his “A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority” strategy document, Adm. John M. Richardson emphasized the Navy’s No. 1 acquisition priority, the Columbia-class SSBN, as necessary to sustain the nation’s nuclear strategic deterrent force.

Richardson stated his goal is to “be ready to deploy USS Columbia (SSBN 826) as quickly as possible – beating the current schedule – in order to preserve our ability to defeat the threat. Refresh and fortify the nuclear command and control system. Develop the nuclear capabilities directed in the Nuclear Posture Review.”

Construction of the first Columbia-class SSGN is scheduled to begin by 2021, with strategic certification expected in 2026, the first patrol in 2031 and complete replacement of the Ohio class by 2039. The tight schedule for the new submarine is dictated by the need for a seamless phase-out of the 14 Ohio-class SSBNs as they reach the end of their 42-year service lives and the nuclear deterrent patrols are assumed by the Columbia class.

With the new era of peer competition in the maritime arena, Richardson also is calling for rapidly acquiring other key platforms and payloads, as listed in the document.

Ships:

■ Award the Future Frigate contract in 2020 to deliver as soon as possible (ASAP).

■ Award the Large Surface Combatant contract in 2023 to deliver ASAP.

■ Award the Large Unmanned Surface Vehicle contract in 2023 to deliver ASAP.

■ Award the Future Small Auxiliary contract in 2023 to deliver ASAP.

■ Award the Future Large Auxiliary contract in 2023 to deliver ASAP.

Underwater Unmanned Vehicles:

Contract for and field the family of Underwater Unmanned Vehicles (Orca, Snakehead, Razorback, Knifefish) ASAP, and no later than (NLT) 2025.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Aircraft, Weapons:

■ Reach MQ-25 first flight in 2021 and initial operating capability ASAP.

■ Reach MQ-4C Triton initial operating capability in 2021.

■ By the end of 2019, identify requirements across the family of systems to replace the F/A-18E/F and EA-18G by 2030.

■ Develop and field an offensive hypersonic weapon by 2025.

■ Develop and field the family of laser weapons (low-power lasers, high-power lasers, Surface Navy Laser Weapons System) beginning in 2019 and NLT 2025.

Networks:

Improve the performance of our current enterprise networks in 2019. Modernize these networks under the NGEN-R contract.

Coast Guard Commandant 'Guardedly Optimistic' for Icebreaker Funding in 2019

ARLINGTON, Va. — Funding for the Coast Guard's requirement for new icebreakers in fiscal 2019 is in peril but the Coast Guard remains confident that a conference between the House and Senate will allow the service to begin procurement.

"We're going to be guardedly optimistic," Adm. Karl Schultz, commandant of the Coast Guard, said Dec. 14 during the Navy League's Special Topic Breakfast at the Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City. "We're hoping to build out a fleet of six icebreakers [three polar security cutters and three medium icebreakers].

"We need one now," he said, pointing out the age — 42 years — of the Coast Guard's only operational heavy icebreaker, Polar Star, which recently began its Operation Deep Freeze journey to Antarctica.

President Donald J. Trump proposed funding of the first polar security cutter (PSC) — a name applied to the future heavy icebreaker by Schultz early in his tenure — in the 2019 Coast Guard budget, part of the budget of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The budget's passage has been delayed over differences in the marked-up Senate version of the bill — which provides the funding—and the House version, which stripped funding Dec. 13 from its version of the bill.

The icebreaker is competing for funding desired by Trump for a more extensive southern border wall in the DHS budget.

Schultz, who has seven years of experience in legislative liaison with Congress, said "I'm going to stick by my guns that I'm guardedly optimistic" for a conference report from Congress that will fund the first PSC.

He pointed out that the first PSC would replace Polar Star, which is dedicated to annual Antarctic resupply missions. The deployment of a new icebreaker to the Arctic would have to await the commissioning of a second PSC.

Schultz plans for construction of the first PSC to begin in spring 2019. He estimates the cutter would be launched in six years and operational a year later.

Search Continues for Marines Missing After Air Collision

ARLINGTON, Va. — The search continues for five Marines whose KC-130 Hercules transport/refueling aircraft collided Dec. 6 with a Marine Corps F/A-18D Hornet strike fighter over the Pacific Ocean.

The two Marines in the F/A-18D apparently ejected; one was rescued in fair condition, the other was recovered and declared dead, III Marine Expeditionary Force said in a Dec. 6 release.

"The search-and-rescue operations continue for the remaining five U.S. Marines who were aboard the KC-130 Hercules and F/A-18 Hornet involved in a mishap about 200 miles off the coast of Japan around 2:00 a.m. Dec. 6," the release said. "The aircraft were conducting routine training and aerial refueling was a part of the training; as to what was taking place when the mishap occurred, that is under investigation."

Forces from the U.S. Navy and Japan are assisting in the search.

“U.S. 7th Fleet is supporting ongoing search-and-rescue efforts with a Navy P-8A maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft flying out of Kadena Air Force Base, along with assistance from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Japanese Coast Guard,” the release said.

The Marine Corps has not yet released the names and units of the seven personnel involved. Marine Aircraft Group 11, headquartered at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, includes one F/A-18D squadron, Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242, and one KC-130J Super Hercules squadron, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152.

The loss of the KC-130J would be the first J-model lost by the Marine Corps. The KC-130J entered service in 2004. More than 50 have been delivered to the Marine Corps.

Navy Must Be ‘Agile’ but ‘Sustainable’ in the Arctic

WASHINGTON – Sustainability is the key issue for U.S. naval operations in the Arctic, a Navy official said.

“The Navy has to be agile [in its Arctic operations],” Jeffrey Barker, a deputy branch head for Policy and Posture in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, said Dec. 4 at a forum, The Arctic and National Security, sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Center, a Washington think tank. “But we’re not going to do anything unless it is sustainable.

“I see this as a balance of space, time, and force,” Barker said.

Barker said the Navy would respond to any combatant commander requirements to operate more often in the Arctic. He stressed that the Navy would work closely with the Coast Guard, Air Force and international partners to accomplish assigned missions in the region.

“We can’t do it all our ourselves,” he said.

Barker cited a recent Government Accountability Office report that said that, in his words, “what we are doing aligns with the National Security Strategy. We think we are positioned very, very well.”

Although the recent focus on increasing Arctic operations has been brought about by the changes in the ice coverage of the Arctic Ocean, the Navy has long been a regular operator in the region.

“Most of the missions we do [in the Arctic] we can accomplish with submarines,” he said. “The submarines are up there to deny bastions to the Russians.

First Heliborne AOEW Pod for Navy Expected in Late 2019

WASHINGTON — Lockheed Martin expects to produce the first engineering development model (EDM) of a heliborne electronic warfare pod by late 2019, a company official said.

Orders for materials for the ALQ-218 Advanced Offboard Electronic Warfare (AOEW) pods began last month, Joe Ottaviano, director of electronic warfare programs at Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems, told reporters Nov. 28 at

the Association of Old Crows convention.

The AOEW pod is designed to be taken aloft by an MH-60R or MH-60S Seahawk helicopter and serve as an offboard electronic attack system to counter anti-ship cruise missiles. The helicopter provides power and mobility for the pod, but the pod's operation is independent of the helicopter crew and linked to the SLQ-32(V)6/7 shipboard electronic warfare system.

"It's bringing capability that hasn't been brought before," Ottaviano said, who noted that testing will be a challenge because of the novelty of the capability. "It is designed to be autonomous or [alternatively] work with the fleet."

He said Lockheed Martin expects to roll out the first AOEW EDM in late 2019. The system completed its critical design review in June. The company has been awarded a contract for six EDMs. Initial operational capability is planned for the 2020. Additional pods are expected to be ordered in a low-rate initial production order in the 2021-2022 time frame.

The pod has successfully completed a fit check on the MH-60 helicopter and can be attached to either side of the helicopter.

"How to get all of this capability in a very small pod was a challenge," Ottaviano said, noting that the pod "generates a lot of heat" and has no supplementary cooling system.

Commander, 2nd Fleet,

Exploring Headquarters, Command Ship Options

WASHIGNTON – The commander of the newly established U.S. 2nd Fleet said he is looking at various options for a new headquarters and the possibility of having a command ship.

“We are looking at options to equip the 2nd Fleet with a platform that allows us to show that we are indeed lean, agile and expeditionary,” Vice Adm. Andrew “Woody” Lewis, said Nov. 28 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

“For the foreseeable future, the 2nd Fleet will be located at Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads, but we are looking at options for both permanent and expeditionary spaces that would allow for flexibility and mobility,” Lewis said. “This could be a combination of facilities at Naval Station Norfolk as well as options for a command ship through our Military Sealift Command.

“Mobility allows to be ready to fight, ready to fight so we don’t have to,” he said. “As a lean and expeditionary staff, a small number of our team will operate forward either from a ship or an austere location as a command-and-control element with reach-back capability to our home guard.”

USS Mount Whitney, currently the flagship of U.S. 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, was the flagship of the former iteration of the U.S. 2nd Fleet that was in existence from February 1950 until it was disestablished in September 2011.

The current U.S. 2nd Fleet was established on Aug. 24. Lewis said he is driving his staff to reach full operational capability in 2019. He expects to be fully staffed in January with 80 personnel.

ESM System on Navy E-2 Aircraft Set for Digital Upgrade in 2022

WASHINGTON – Lockheed Martin is developing a digital upgrade of the analog electronic surveillance measures (ESM) system installed on the Navy's E-2D Advanced Hawkeye carrier-based early warning aircraft and plans to complete development by 2022.

The current ALQ-217 is the analog ESM system that alerts operators to radar activity and identifies the emitter.

Under a $65 million contract awarded in June, Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems is developing the digital upgrade and is scheduled to complete the engineering and manufacturing development phase – including design, qualification testing, acceptance testing and flight testing by 2022, Max Pelifian, Lockheed Martin's program manager for Advanced Airborne Electronic Warfare, told reporters Nov. 27 at the Association of Old Crows International Symposium. The next phase will bring the digital system to initial operational capability.

The ALQ-217 includes eight line-replaceable assemblies – antennas, antenna front ends and a receiver/processor – of which five will be upgraded under the contract.

Lockheed has been providing the analog ALQ-217 to the E-2 aircraft since 1999. Lockheed Martin has delivered 28 ALQ-217 analog sets for the E-2C Hawkeye and 46 sets for the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye. The company has 29 more on order for the E-2D, some of which could receive the digital upgrade on the production line if the timing permits.

The company completed the Navy's system requirements review for the digital upgrade this month. The critical design review is anticipated by the end of 2019.

Vice Adm. Merz: New Round, Gun Removal Options for Zumwalt DDG

WASHINGTON – The Navy is looking at options for the Advanced Gun System (AGS) on the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer (DDG) as it completes mission systems installation, options that include developing a new round or removing the guns all together.

The Zumwalt DDG is equipped with two 155 mm AGS guns – built by BAE Systems – for which the Long-Range Land-Attack Projectile (LRLAP) was developed by Lockheed Martin. The LRLAP, however, proved too costly and its range too short, resulting in its cancellation. The Navy has been exploring options to develop a new round but is not letting the lack of one delay the ship's entry into the fleet.

"We determined that the best future for that ship is to get it out there with the capability that it has and separate out the Advanced Gun System, leaving everything else in place," Vice Adm. William R. Merz, deputy chief of naval operations for Warfare Systems, testified Nov. 27 before the Senate Armed Services Seapower subcommittee, in response to a question from Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, the state in which the Zumwalt class has been built.

"[The Zumwalt] is a very capable platform with or without that

gun," Merz said. "We will be developing either the round that goes with that gun or what we are going to do with that space if we decide to remove that gun in the future. The ship is doing fine, on track to be operational in 2021 in the fleet."

Merz said the Zumwalt, built as a land-attack platform, has been "remissioned to a strike platform, whether sea targets or land targets. It takes advantage of its tremendous arsenal of VLS [vertical launching system] cells. Those VLS cells are larger than any other surface ship VLS cells so that opens up an aperture of more weapons options for that ship."

He termed the projectile challenge "as a science and technology challenge, not an engineering problem. We just cannot get the thing to fly as far as we want."

Asked by King if the Zumwalt would be a platform for a future directed-energy weapon, Merz said the ship had the "balance of SWAPC – space, weight, power and communications – that allows us to expand this ship over time. She is going to be a candidate for any advanced weapon system that we develop."