

Commander, 2nd Fleet, Exploring Headquarters, Command Ship Options

WASHINGTON – 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.”

Navy Awards Contract to VT Halter for New Oceanographic Survey Ship

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded a contract to shipbuilder VT Halter Marine toward advance work for the

eighth Pathfinder-class oceanographic survey ship (T-AGS).

The Naval Sea Systems Command awarded to VT Halter Marine a “not-to-exceed \$9 million undefinitized contract action for functional design engineering, procurement of long-lead time material, and limited advanced production to support the Oceanographic Survey Ship (T-AGS 67),” the Defense Department announced on Nov. 19.

VT Halter Marine, based in Pascagoula, Mississippi, has built seven Pathfinders, six of which were delivered between 1994 and 2001. One of these, USNS Sumner, was withdrawn from service in 2014. A seventh, USNS Maury, was delivered in 2016. It is 15 feet longer than the earlier Pathfinders and features a moon pool to facilitate operation of unmanned underwater vehicles.

The Pathfinder class is operated by the Military Sealift Command for the Naval Meteorology & Oceanography Command.

Naval Strike Missile System Planned for Installation on LCS 27

ARLINGTON, Va. – Lockheed Martin is in the process of integrating the Over-the-Horizon (OTH) Weapon System on its Freedom-variant littoral combat ship (LCS) and has identified the ship to be built ready for the missile system.

The first Freedom LCS to be built ready to receive the Naval Strike Missile (NSM), the weapon of the OTH system, will be LCS 27, the future USS Nantucket, Joe DiPietro, vice president

of Small Combatants and Ship Systems, said Nov. 15 in a teleconference with reporters from Annapolis, Maryland.

The NSM, developed by Norway's Kongsberg, is a ship- and ground-launched anti-ship cruise missile that will be integrated by Raytheon Missile Co. into the OTH system. It will give the LCS an OTH anti-ship capability as an initiative to improve the lethality of the Navy's warships.

"We're working on the design and integration of that," DiPietro said. "[The Navy] had us do space and weight on our previous hull that was awarded for the Naval Strike Missile and now we're working on the modernization package to be able to put that in to an in-service asset as well."

Rear Adm. Joseph P. Neagley, program executive officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants, told Seapower last month that the NSM will be installed on all LCSs, regardless of which mission package is installed.

DiPietro said Lockheed Martin also is working on a backfit of the NSM, but that the Navy will determine the schedule of ships to be fitted with the NSM.

DiPietro also said the company is working on the integration of the Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program Block II Lite into the Freedom variant.

"We actually already have put that test asset on LCS 1 Freedom and ran through the range and tested it with our COMBATSS21 configuration, being a derivative of Aegis," he said.

Navy Orders F-35s Under Contract Modification

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded Lockheed Martin a \$22.7 billion contract modification for 255 F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighters, the Defense Department said in a Nov. 14 release. Of the order, 42 aircraft are for the Navy and Marine Corps.

Naval Air Systems Command awarded the low-rate initial production contract modification for Lot 12 aircraft plus more added by Congress for fiscal 2018-2019.

The 255 Lightning IIs in this order include 36 F-35Bs for the U.S. Marine Corps and 16 F-35Cs for the U.S. Navy. The order includes 64 F-35As for the U.S. Air Force; 60 F-35As for Foreign Military Sales; and 71 F-35As and 18 F-35Bs for nations partnered in the F-35 program. Work under the contract is expected to be completed by March 2023.

The F-35's production remains in low rate because it has not yet completed its operational test and evaluation.

The Marine Corps' F-35B made its first operational shipboard deployments this year and on Sept. 27 Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 conducted the Lightning II's first combat missions, over Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom Sentinel. The Navy's first F-35C fleet squadron, Strike Fighter Squadron 147, has been formed and is training in its new aircraft.

Navy Super Hornet Crashes in Philippine Sea; Crew Rescued

PHILIPPINE SEA – A Carrier Air Wing 5 (CVW-5) F/A-18F experienced a mechanical issue that resulted in the crew ejecting while conducting routine operations in the Philippine Sea Nov. 12, Task Force 70 public affairs said in a release.

“The crew was immediately and safely recovered by USS Ronald Reagan search-and-rescue aircraft and brought back to the ship for evaluation by medical personnel, the release said. “Both aviators are in good condition.”

The F/A-18F was flown by Strike Fighter Squadron 102, one of four Super Hornet squadrons assigned to Carrier Air Wing Five.

Two other CVW-5 aircraft have been lost in mishaps over the past year. On Nov. 22, 2018, a C-2A Greyhound assigned to Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 30 Detachment Five crashed into the Philippine Sea while en route to Ronald Reagan, killing three Sailors. On Oct. 19, an MH-60R Seahawk assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 77 crashed on the flight deck of the carrier, injuring 12 persons.

CVW-5 is embarked onboard Ronald Reagan and is currently underway in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Ronald Reagan has resumed normal operations and the crash is under investigation.

Navy Submarine Force Boss: All Submarines to Get 3D Printers

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy is moving to equip all of its submarines with additive manufacturing capability, also known as 3D printing, as part of an initiative to increase at-sea repair capability for the submarine force.

“[We’re] actively experimenting with additive manufacturing and working expediently to provide this capability to all my ships,” Vice Adm. Chas Richard, commander, Submarine Forces, said Nov. 7 at the Naval Submarine League’s symposium. “All my boats will get 3D printers in the near term.”

Richard said that the crew of the attack submarine USS Virginia “went and got their own 3D printer and, using that, built themselves apart at sea to help keep their boat on deployment. It is that type of problem-solving that happens daily across the force.”

Navy: Torpedo Tube-Launched Version of Razorback UUV Planned

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy is on track to deliver an operational unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) for routine submarine deployment but also plans to develop the capability to launch it from a submarine’s torpedo tubes.

The Razorback is a submarine-launched version of the Hydroid-built Littoral Battlespace Sensing Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, a version of the REMUS 600 UUV that entered full-rate production for the Navy in 2013. Details of the Razorback's payloads and capabilities are classified, but it is planned for launch and recovery from a Dry Deck Shelter, a compartment that can be carried on top of the hull of certain submarines.

"We're currently fielding those vehicles for integration with the Dry Deck Shelter and we have plans to develop a torpedo tube-launched version of that in the near future," said Capt. Peter Small, the Navy's program manager for UUVs and unmanned surface vehicles, Nov. 7 at the Naval Submarine League's symposium.

Navy Submarine Warfare Director: Navy to Keep Columbia SSBN Line 'Hot' After 12th Boat

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy plans to keep the production line of the Columbia-class nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) ready for new submarine production, the Navy's director for submarine warfare said.

"What we are going to do is we're going to keep the Columbia line hot," Rear Adm. John Tammen, said Nov. 8 at the Naval Submarine League's annual symposium. "That gives us the option, if STRATCOM [U.S. Strategic Command] says we need more than 12, well then we can produce more than 12."

Keeping the line open also may aid in a smoother transition to the Navy's next submarines, possibly large mother ships for unmanned underwater vehicles and other types mission systems.

"If STRATCOM doesn't need more than 12, then we're looking at what we call the Large-Volume Host Platform, where we'll take that center section – we haven't nailed down the concept – but there will be the ability to host vehicles on board inside that center section," Tammen said.

Also speaking at the symposium, Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe, director of Strategic Systems Programs, noted that the Defense Department's Nuclear Posture Review calls for a minimum of 12 Columbia-class SSBNs, not a hard limitation of 12 boats.

The design of the lead boat of the new class, Columbia, is 83 percent complete. Construction is scheduled to begin next year. The boat is scheduled for its first patrol in 2031.