AUKUS-Related Foreign Military Sales Case Goes to Congress

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Release from NAVSEA Office of Corporate Communications and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Office Public Affairs

Dec. 11, 2023

By NAVSEA Office of Corporate Communications and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Office Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Department of State endorsed, and the Defense

Security Cooperation Agency delivered congressional notification of, a proposed Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Case for submarine training devices, personnel training, planning, and nonrecurring engineering (NRE) services in support of the AUKUS Pillar One Optimal Pathway. The case will span nine years and have a ceiling of $2 billion pending passage of several legislative proposals.

“The submarine trainers are the same ones used by U.S. crews assigned to Virginia Class boats,” said Capt. Lincoln Reifsteck, the AUKUS Integration and Acquisition (AUKUS I&A) Program Manager. “The systems will be used by Australian submariners and U.S. crews on boats assigned to HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia as part of Submarine Rotational Force – West (SRF-W) which will be established as early as late 2027. The Royal Australian Navy will utilize the trainers to train its crews ahead of buying and operating their own Virginia Class submarines.”

The United States, with Congressional approval, will sell three Virginia Class submarines to Australia starting in the early 2030s with the potential of increasing the total number to five. The training devices will be used for the life of the Australian-flagged Virginia Class SSNs.

The FMS case also provides the mechanism to train Australian civilians and contractors at United States Naval Shipyards. Pending Congressional approval, the first Australian submarine maintainers will begin training at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) in the second quarter of calendar year 2024.

“Right now we have Australian Maintenance Personnel, or AMPs, observing how we plan and execute SSN maintenance at PHNSY & IMF,” said Reifsteck. “They’re also laying the ground work to have up to 75 Australians per quarter living and training in Hawaii so we can bring them over as soon as we’re able to so.”

The AUKUS partnership is a strategic endeavor that strengthens the three nations' national security and promotes peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under AUKUS Pillar One via the Optimal Pathway announced by the heads of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023. AUKUS I&A is responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to deliver conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines to the Royal Australian Navy at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards.

SECNAV Del Toro Establishes DON Office of Strategic Assessment

Release from SECNAV Public Affairs

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11 December 2023

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro today announced the establishment of the Department of the Navy Office of Strategic Assessment (DON OSA).

A cornerstone of the Secretary's Maritime Statecraft initiative, DON OSA will inform the development of guiding principles and priorities to promote a modernized and more lethal force that stands ready to deter high-end conflict while simultaneously protecting and advancing the global maritime interests of the Nation.

DON OSA will provide the Secretary independent, data-driven assessments and recommendations that will help drive smart choices for the Department of the Navy to balance current readiness investments and future modernization, enhancing the Department's competitiveness against the pacing threat. OSA demonstrates the Secretary's commitment to ensure the DON is the best possible steward of taxpayer dollars.

"The Office of Strategic Assessment will provide a critical capability ensuring that we are ready to build upon our maritime supremacy across the globe today while also preparing for the dynamic challenges of the future," said Secretary Del Toro. "Data-driven assessments looking strategically across the entire DON enterprise in support of the Joint Force will help us make smarter choices as we balance investments in current readiness and future modernization in order to enhance the Department's competitiveness against the pacing threat."

Additionally, Secretary Del Toro appointed Dr. Cara LaPointe to serve as the first Director of Strategic Assessment. A U.S. Naval Academy graduate, LaPointe brings more 25 years of national security, technology policy, and leadership experience to the position. LaPointe's deep background of government service includes service as a Naval Surface Warfare Officer and experience within the acquisition community as an Engineering Duty Officer. She also has served within the Executive Office of the President under three administrations, including as a Senior Advisor. Most recently, LaPointe came from Johns Hopkins University, where she was a founding Co-Director of the Institute for Assured Autonomy. She has also served as an expert advisor for global emerging technology initiatives at both the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as an inaugural member of the DON Science and Technology Board.

"I am deeply honored to serve in this new role as Director of OSA. I look forward to collaborating with the Navy and Marine Corps as well as with our other key partners across the

Department of Defense, academia, and industry as we collectively chart a course for the future of the DON in the face of dynamic global change," said LaPointe. "In close partnership with our One Navy-Marine Corps Team, OSA will build on the transformational paths the Services have charted to advance the Department's enduring priorities."

By aligning investments and actions to the Department's enduring priorities of strengthening maritime dominance, building a culture of warfighting excellence, and enhancing strategic partnerships, OSA will ensure the Department continues to field the world's most dominant maritime force.

U.S. 3rd Fleet Hosts RIMPAC Mid-Planning Conference

Release from U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs

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Dec. 6, 2023

KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii – Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet unveiled the new Rim of the Pacific 2024 logo at the kick-off of the middle planning conference for the exercise at Marine Corps Base Hawaii Dec. 5, 2023.

More than 800 personnel from representing nations participating in RIMPAC 2024 were in attendance to view the official logo before it was displayed to the public.

Of the 47 highly competitive entries from around the world, the final design was a combination of two separate submissions – one from Lt. Tristan Robertson of the Royal Canadian Navy and one from Lt. Emily Paiz of the U.S Navy.

“The logo for RIMPAC represents the progress that has been made since the inception of the first exercise back in 1971,” said U.S. 3rd Fleet Deputy Commander Capt. Richard Meyer. “The design reflects the development of new and longstanding relationships while also highlighting the versatility in training that is a direct result of having a joint exercise of this scale.”

The RIMPAC 2024 theme “Partners: Integrated and Prepared” was the inspiration behind the creation of the logo. The creators wanted the logo to convey that RIMPAC is not just an exercise designed to bring multiple nations together, but also an event that allows its participants the opportunity to develop the relationships and partnerships required to meet the needs of each nation’s training and interoperability objectives.

“There has been tremendous growth with partnerships among nations,” said RIMPAC coordinator Royal Australian Navy Lt. Cmdr. Timothy Gill. “We continue to have more nations who want

to join, want to train with us, and also want to train with all nations as a unit. We are all focused on the same goal of maritime safety and security.”

Unlike the previous RIMPAC, the entire exercise will solely take place in and around the Hawaiian Islands. To commemorate that, the backdrop of the logo features a tropical landscape. At the center of the logo is a trident that is representative of both U.S. 3rd Fleet and the joint warfighting capabilities of land, air and sea.

The logo was revealed at beginning of the mid-planning conference for RIMPAC 2024, a biennial event that allows participants from all partner nations to conduct detailed exercise planning, synchronize all aspects of the exercise, including harbor, force integration and tactical phases, and review draft schedules of events.

“I anticipate that this RIMPAC will be more dynamic than previous iterations, and will provide increased opportunities for all participating nations to work together as an integrated and interchangeable force,” said Meyer. “While its focus on the maritime remains, the scale and scope of RIMPAC has grown and evolved over the years into a true multi-domain exercise. We see particular growth in the air and land domains. In keeping with the updated RIMPAC theme, vision and objective, RIMPAC 2024 will mark a notable advancement in the history of the exercise.”

The world’s largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world’s oceans.

RIMPAC 2024 is the 29th exercise in the series that began in 1971 and was held annually until 1974, when it became a

biennial exercise due to its increasing scale. The founding nations were Australia, Canada and the United States.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Waesche returns home after 89-day counternarcotics patrol in Eastern Pacific Ocean

Release from U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area

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Dec. 10, 2023

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751) and crew returned to homeport, Saturday, following an 89-day counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The 418-foot national security cutter and its crew patrolled more than 19,750 nautical miles conducting law enforcement and search and rescue operations in international waters off Central and South America.

Waesche deployed with a Jacksonville, Florida, based Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aircrew, members from Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 101 and 102, and contractors who flew Scan Eagle, an advanced unmanned aircraft system.While conducting flight operations with Air Station San Diego off the coast of San Diego, Waesche's crew received notification from of a mariner 300 nautical miles west of San Diego aboard a disabled sailing vessel with no food in 8-10 foot seas. Waesche diverted from its position to the disabled sailing vessel and launched its Over-The-Horizon (OTH) small boat crew to rescue the survivor and bring him aboard.

Waesche participated in San Francisco Fleet Week 2023, hosting several days of public tours and representing the service during the Parade of Ships event, which involved formation maneuvering with U.S. Navy vessels and rendering honors to the Secretary of the Navy in a pass-in-review.

After departing San Francisco, Waesche began its counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific, and interdicted five smuggling vessels operating in international waters, deploying the cutter's Over-the-Horizon (OTH) small boats with boarding teams, the Scan Eagle drone, and a helicopter with a precision marksman. Waesche's last interdiction was a self-propelled semi-submersible, resulting

in the seizure of 2,510 kgs of cocaine.Waesche's crew offloaded more than 18,000 pounds of cocaine in San Diego, Wednesday, which included two seizures of drug-smuggling vessels made by U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Active's crew.

Waesche is the second Legend-class cutter of the U.S. Coast Guard and is homeported at Coast Guard Island in Alameda, CA. Waesche is 418-feet long with a top speed of 28 knots and a range of 12,000 nautical miles. It is equipped with a flight deck and hangars capable of housing two multi-mission helicopters and is outfitted with the most advanced command, control, and communications equipment.

L3Harris' VAMPIRE System Helps U.S. Navy Fill Ukraine's Counter-UAS Gap with Speed and Agility

L3Harris has delivered all Vehicle Agnostic Modular Palletized ISR Rocket Equipment – or VAMPIRE™ – counter UAS systems on schedule to strengthen Ukrainian security defense efforts. (L3Harris photos)

Release from L3Harris

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MELBOURNE, Fla., Dec. 11, 2023 – L3Harris Technologies' (NYSE:LHX) Vehicle Agnostic Modular Palletized ISR Rocket Equipment (VAMPIRE™) multi-purpose weapons systems are having an immediate impact in Ukraine's wartime efforts.

"Early customer reports say VAMPIRE is already having a positive effect in Ukraine thanks to the U.S. Navy's ability to respond with 'unprecedented speed and agility,'" said Jason Lambert, President, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, L3Harris. "As adversary tactics evolve, our customers rely on us to anticipate, design and rapidly deliver reliable mission capabilities. We'll continue partnering with the Department of Defense to field critical capabilities that will help save lives."

VAMPIRE enables Ukrainian ground forces to target and destroy

enemy drones and defend against adversary ground threats. L3Harris designed the system to deliver advanced reconnaissance and precision strike capabilities to protect Ukrainian civilian infrastructure from enemy attacks.

L3Harris completed installation and delivery of all systems, in support of Ukrainian defense efforts, on time to DoD.

VAMPIRE's mission management system integrates an advanced company WESCAM MX™-10 RSTA targeting sensor with its weapons station, allowing an operator to engage targets quickly and accurately. It combines affordability with accuracy from the Advanced Precision Kill Weapons System rocket, selected specifically for use in Ukraine, which will incorporate L3Harris' proximity fuze for increased system lethality for engaging ground and aerial targets.

Saab has received a contract from the U.S. Navy for a Double Eagle Semi-Autonomous Remotely Operated Vehicle (SAROV) for the Kuwait Naval Force.

The Double Eagle Systems are in operation with many Navies around the world.
Release from SAAB

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The Double Eagle family of undersea vehicles is a safe and operationally proven ROV system, used by navies around the world supporting mine countermeasure (MCM) missions. In the SAROV configuration the vehicle can be used both as an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) for detection, classification and identification, and as an ROV for mine disposal. The U.S. Navy is procuring this system as a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program for the State of Kuwait's Naval Force.

Developed and produced at Saab in Linköping, Sweden, this sale represents a milestone in expanding the production of this Swedish technology to the U.S. Saab, Inc.'s Autonomous and Undersea Systems Division will produce parts of this system in close collaboration with other production sites in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark.

"We're excited to introduce production of this undersea

vehicle capability to the United States. The Autonomous and Undersea Systems team has established both a highly experienced team of undersea vehicle experts and significant new production capabilities for Saab that position us for greater U.S. market expansion," said Erik Smith, President and CEO of Saab in the U.S.

These highly maneuverable vehicles can be launched from any type of ship, from the shore, or from a craft of opportunity. All Double Eagle systems can be housed in a standard container, providing a deployable solution across a variety of platforms enabling rapid response to mine threats.

USMC Orders More Amphibious Combat Vehicles from BAE

Dec. 7, 2023

BAE Systems has been awarded a $211 million firm-fixed-price modification to a previously awarded contract by the U.S. Marine Corps for more Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACVs) under the Marine Corps' fourth order for full-rate production (FRP). In addition to vehicle production, the award covers procurement of 40 FRP ACV Personnel (ACV-P) variants, fielding and support costs, and support and test equipment.

The world's most capable amphibious vehicle, the ACV 8×8 platform provides true open-ocean amphibious capability, land mobility, survivability, payload, and growth potential to accommodate the ever-evolving operational needs of the Marine Corps.

"With this contract and alongside our strategic partner, Iveco Defence Vehicles, we are able to continue to offer the Marine Corps predictability, stability, and continuity with production and the supply chain to deliver ACVs on time and on budget," said Garrett Lacaillade, vice president of amphibious

vehicles for BAE Systems. “With more than 200 ACVs delivered to date, this program, which began full-rate production in December 2020, has matured to deliver this critical capability so that Marines can fulfill their missions around the world.”

ACV-P is the first of a family of four variants to be manufactured and delivered to the Marine Corps. Additional variants include the ACV Command and Control (ACV-C) variant which is currently in production; the ACV 30mm Cannon (ACV-30) variant which BAE Systems is currently under contract to produce multiple production representative vehicles; and the ACV Recovery (ACV-R) variant which is currently in design and development.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE Systems locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and, York, Pennsylvania. Deliveries are anticipated to begin in April 2025.

ELBIT AMERICA WINS $500 MILLION CONTRACT TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING NIGHT VISION TO U.S. MARINES

The Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle is lightweight, provides critical advantages on the modern battlefield

FORT WORTH, TEXAS – DEC. 7, 2023 – Elbit America received a five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) contract from the United States Marine Corps (USMC) to continue producing the Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle (SBNVG). The competitive contract is worth up to $500 million, with an initial delivery order for nearly $127 million. The goggles will be produced in Roanoke, Virginia. The company has delivered more than 15,000 SBNVG systems to the USMC since 2019.

The SBNVG has proven to be a game-changer in modern warfare, as it is lightweight without compromising capability. The goggles currently provide image intensification, with an enhanced clip-on thermal imager. The set-up allows Marines to operate at night, or in dark buildings and tunnels where one's situational awareness is challenged.

The SBNVG is a helmet-mounted system that provides Marines with increased depth perception, enhanced clarity through high-performance white phosphor image intensifier tubes, a

thermal-imaging capability, and more. These features, along with extra-long run times, provide Marines an added edge on the battlefield.

“No matter the light conditions or environment, Marines are tapped for challenging missions. Equipped with Elbit America’s Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggles, Marines can quickly understand their surroundings and act,” said Erik Fox, Vice President of Warfighter Systems at Elbit America.

“Elbit America is proud of our long history supplying Marines with night vision and electro-optic innovations,” said Raanan Horowitz, the company’s president and CEO. “We continue to refine our portfolio, offering solutions that enable the networked Warfighter of the future with sophisticated decision aids and display systems that work in all operational environments.”

More details about Elbit America Night Vision are available at https://www.elbitamerica.com/night-vision.

USS Mount Whitney Returns to Homeport

Release from Commander, U.S. 6th Fleet

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Dec. 8, 2023

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Mario Coto, USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20)

GAETA, Italy – The U.S. 6th Fleet Blue Ridge-class command and control ship USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) returned to homeport in Gaeta, Italy, Dec. 8, following support of U.S. operations in the eastern Mediterranean Sea since October.

While at sea, Mount Whitney worked with allied and partner navies and visited ports, including Larnaca, Republic of Cyprus and Souda Bay, Republic of Greece. These engagements strengthened regional security and stability and enhanced enduring relationships.

Mount Whitney, homeported in Gaeta, Italy, operates with a combined crew of U.S. Sailors and Military Sealift Command

civil service mariners in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national security interests in Europe and Africa.

U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations. Also Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability for over 80 years.

Stand-off Offensive Sea Mine Capability Needed, Former Vice Chairman Said

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By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

WASHINGTON – The United States needs a more capable and expanded offensive sea mine capability in order to deter China and defend Taiwan, said a retired former admiral who served as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“Mine warfare is going to be very important in a future conflict, especially if we can do it quickly after the start of the fight,” said retired Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr., a former naval aviator, speaking Dec. 7 on a panel at the Defense Forum Washington of the U.S. Naval Institute and sponsored by Lockheed Martin and HII.

“Mine warfare has a key role to play – if you think of the Chinese military as a center of gravity – but also has a key role to play if you think of the Chinese leadership as a center of gravity – by shutting down all of their ports fairly quickly,” Winnefeld said. “You can do that to counter a

military … but also in legal terms understand that commerce can be a collateral damage associated with that.

“Frankly, we’re just not there,” the admiral said. “We are terribly short in numbers and technology of those systems. “There are some actions we can take—very quickly—at least partially rectify that. There are some technical actions we can take in the mid-term that would make it even better, but unless we focus on that, we will not be where we need to be.

Winnefeld pointed out that there is no community of offensive mine warfare officers in the Navy, and no champion of offensive mine warfare among flag officers, and he attributed that shortcoming as a reason for a lack of program support for offensive mine warfare. He noted that mine warfare and counter-mine warfare are “dramatically different from each other, and we need to have that community of offensive mine warfare.”

He referred to the occasions when U.S. ships were sunk or damaged by enemy mines in various conflicts and that the United States aircraft and submarines used offensive mining with great success against Japanese shipping and ports during World War II.

The principal U.S. mine is the Quickstrike, a conventional 500- or 1,000-pound bomb with a fuse and a Joint Direct Attack munition kit for precision guidance. It can be fitted with a wing kit that allows deployment at a standoff range of about 35 miles away from the aimpoint.

Because only a few aircraft types can deliver those mines close to China and survive the mission, Winnefeld recommends a small propulsion engine such as a rocket motor be attached to the mines to allow the mines to be launched from a longer distance and in larger quantities.

“You could shut down every single Chinese port almost overnight if you did that,” Winnefeld said. “That’s powerful.

That will strike fear into their hearts.”

Speaking later in the forum was Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Virginia, who said that offensive mine warfare “was a great capability that we have undersold through the years. If you look at our adversaries, they have very advanced mining technology.”

Wittman pointed out that mines are inexpensive and can be deployed with latency and activated when desired. They can be replenished relatively quickly. When combined with a more robust sensor networks, “we can have a tremendous deterrent effect at a very low cost per weapon.”