Stage 2 of the Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Cutter Moves Forward

Artist's rendition of a Stage 1 Offshore Patrol Cutter. *LEONARDO DRS*

WASHINGTON – The Coast Guard today issued a notice to Austal USA, the offshore patrol cutter (OPC) Stage 2 contractor, to proceed on detail design work to support future production of OPCs, Coast Guard Headquarters said in a release. The Coast Guard issued the notice following the withdrawal of an award protest filed in July with the Government Accountability Office by an unsuccessful Stage 2 offeror.

The Coast Guard on June 30, 2022, awarded a fixed-price incentive (firm target) contract through a full and open competition to Austal USA to produce up to 11 offshore patrol cutters. The initial award is valued at $208.26 million and supports detail design and long lead-time material for the fifth OPC, with options for production of up to 11 OPCs in total. The contract has a potential value of up to $3.33

billion if all options are exercised.

The Coast Guard’s requirements for OPC Stage 2 detail design and production were developed to maintain commonality with earlier OPCs in critical areas such as the hull and propulsion systems, but provide flexibility to propose and implement new design elements that benefit lifecycle cost, production and operational efficiency and performance.

The 25-ship OPC program of record complements the capabilities of the service’s national security cutters, fast response cutters and polar security cutters as an essential element of the Department of Homeland Security’s layered maritime security strategy. The OPC will meet the service’s long-term need for cutters capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups and is essential to stopping smugglers at sea, interdicting undocumented non-citizens, rescuing mariners, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to disasters and protecting ports.

Navy Approves Northrop Grumman’s New Navigation Capability for Fleet Deployment

Sailors stand watch on the bridge aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Roosevelt (DDG 80) as the ship conducts a replenishment-at-sea with the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), Oct. 1, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Danielle Baker*

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.— The U.S. Navy has approved Northrop Grumman Corporation's new Electronic Chart Display and Information System (Navy ECDIS) for deployment to its fleet, the company said in an Oct. 5 release.

The Navy's Operational Test and Evaluation Force (OPTEVFOR) issued a formal determination that Navy ECDIS is "operationally suitable, operationally effective and cyber survivable." This new capability will be a core element to all U.S. Navy bridge and navigation systems.

Navy ECDIS processes and displays multiple chart formats including digital nautical charts developed by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. The system tracks targets from the vessel's navigation radar, enabling creation of route plans, automation of plan execution and monitoring progress

along the route. Safety checking functions analyze chart data and radar targets to warn of hazards to safe navigation while underway.

“Our agile approach to developing Navy ECDIS enabled software to be developed in sprints, with customer input at every step of the way,” said Todd Leavitt, vice president, naval and oceanic systems, Northrop Grumman. “This workflow allowed the Navy to see and evaluate results of their input as they came up and saved them both time and money.”

Navy ECDIS will provide the next generation of navigation capabilities to the fleet including compliance with the standard for mission interoperability with NATO allies, implementing cybersecurity requirements as well as enhancements to the human machine interface to simplify operation, improve situational awareness and increase the safety of navigation.

OPTEVFOR’s approval of Navy ECDIS is the culmination of nearly a year of rigorous government testing. The test and approval process began with sea trials on the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) and continued with evaluation activities at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Philadelphia Division (NSWCPD).

The Navy has directed the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) to be the first ship in the fleet to receive Navy ECDIS. NSWCPD will perform the installation this October. The Navy plans to install the system on 115 ships in the next three years, demonstrating the power of scalability of software defined systems such as Navy ECDIS.

Northrop Grumman developed and fielded the Navy’s current ECDIS software, Voyage Management System, which has since become a core element of the bridge and navigation system on every U.S. Navy ship and submarine. Northrop Grumman’s broad range of navigation systems provides precise, survivable,

secure, resilient and agile solutions for sea, land, air and space.

Keel Authenticated for the Future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek

The keel for the future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek (T-ATS

8) was ceremonially laid at Bollinger Houma Shipyards in Houma, LA, Oct. 3. *Bollinger Houma Shipyards*

WASHINGTON – The keel for the future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek (T-ATS 8) was ceremonially laid at Bollinger Houma Shipyards, Oct. 3, Team Ships Public Affairs said in an Oct. 5 release.

Named for the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, the ship honors the original people of modern-day Michigan and their proud tradition of service to their country. Ojibwe is also referred to as Chippewa and Anishinabek means "original people." The keel authenticator was the Honorable Theresa Peters Jackson, Chief of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe.

"This is an awesome Navy day as we gather to celebrate this multi-mission platform and the range of capabilities it will bring to the fleet, including towing, salvage, rescue, oil spill response and humanitarian assistance," said Rear Adm. Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer, Ships. "It is an honor to be joined by members of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe as the keel is authenticated for their namesake ship and we are excited to honor their heritage and commitment to service of country."

The Navajo class (T-ATS) provides ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support fleet operations. T-ATS replaces and fulfills the capabilities that were previously provided by the Fleet Ocean Tug (T-ATF 166) and Rescue and Salvage Ships (T-ARS 50) class ships.

In addition to T-ATS 8, Bollinger is constructing USNS Navajo (T-ATS 6) and USNS Cherokee Nation (T-ATS 7) and is under contract for USNS Lenni Lenape (T-ATS 9) and USNS Muscogee Creek Nation (T-ATS 10).

Keel Authenticated for Pathfinder-Class T-AGS 67

The keel of the next oceanographic survey ship (T-AGS 67) was ceremonially laid at Halter Marine in Pascagoula, MS, Oct. 4. Here, Halter Marine welders etch names and the hull number into the keel plate. *Halter Marine*

WASHINGTON – The keel for the Navy's next oceanographic survey ship (T-AGS 67) was ceremonially laid at Halter Marine in Pascagoula, MS, Oct. 4, Team Ships Public Affairs said in an Oct. 5 release. The keel authenticator was Rear Adm. Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer, Ships.

"This is an awesome Navy day as we gather to celebrate the start of construction of the eighth ship in the Pathfinder class," Anderson said. "We look forward to delivering another ship that provides significant capability in undersea warfare and charting the world's coastlines."

Equipped with a moon pool for unmanned vehicle deployment and

retrieval, T-AGS 67 will be a multi-mission ship that will perform acoustic, biological, physical and geophysical surveys, providing much of the U.S. military's information on the ocean environment. The vessel will be more than 350 feet in length with an overall beam of 58 feet.

T-AGS 67 will be operated by the Military Sealift Command (MSC). MSC consists of non-combatant, civilian crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships, chart ocean bottoms, conduct undersea surveillance, tactically preposition combat cargo at sea and move military equipment and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces around the world.

USS Porter Completes Service with Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) departs Naval Station Rota, Spain, to begin its homeport shift to Norfolk, Virginia, Sept. 28, 2022. *U.S NAVY*

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) departed Naval Station Rota, Spain, on Sept. 28, 2022, marking the end of its time as a Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe (FDNF-E) destroyer, said Lt. j.g. Anna M. Kukelhan of Commander, Naval Forces Europe/Africa, in an Oct. 5 release.

Porter has been stationed in Rota, Spain for seven years, initially joining USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) and USS Ross (DDG 71) on April 30, 2015 as the third FDNF-E destroyer assigned to Destroyer Squadron 60 and Commander, Task Force (CTF) 65, which operates under command and control of U.S. Sixth Fleet in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations.

“Porter’s time in Sixth Fleet was an invaluable experience for all. The crew and I depart Rota, Spain at the highest state of

readiness thanks to the many operations and exercises conducted with our NATO allies and partners," said Cmdr. Christopher Petro, Porter's commanding officer. "We are extremely grateful for personal and professional development provided by the opportunities and challenges encountered as a member of Forward Deployed Naval Forces Europe."

Porter conducted 11 patrols in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, finishing her most recent patrol in July 2022. Throughout these patrols, Porter sailed through the Mediterranean Sea, Baltic Sea, Black Sea and High North. The ship has also crossed the Atlantic three times, building interoperability with NATO allies and partners throughout the region.

Porter worked with the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and the French Charles de Gaulle Carrier Strike Groups, although most of its time underway was independently deployed. Porter's patrols focused on a wide variety of mission areas, including surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, anti-air warfare and strike warfare, dedicated to ensuring interoperability with U.S. allies and offering a stable presence in the region.

During its seven years with the FDNF-E force, Porter participated in many joint operations with allies and other branches of service. Some of the notable exercises the ship participated in include FOST, BALTOPS, Atlas Handshake, Joint Warrior, Sea Breeze, Polaris and Atlantic Resolve.

In April 2017, Porter launched 59 Tomahawk missiles into Al-Shayrat Air Base, Syria, in coordination with USS Ross (DDG 71), in response to the Syrian government's chemical attacks on civilians during the Syrian civil war.

Porter will be replaced on the FDNF-E force by USS Bulkeley (DDG 84), the latest destroyer to arrive to Rota, Spain. USS Bulkeley was commissioned in December of 2001, and is named

for Vice Admiral John D. Bulkeley.

With Porter's departure, all four ships originally assigned to CTF 65 have been replaced. With all homeport shifts now completed, the new FDNF-E ships are the USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51), USS Roosevelt (DDG 80), USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117) and the USS Bulkeley (DDG 84). The new members of the FDNF-E force will continue the exemplary work accomplished by the first assigned destroyers, including Porter.

"Throughout her seven years patrolling Sixth Fleet, Porter Sailors consistently demonstrated our capabilities and integration with joint and combined forces. I am extremely proud of the work USS Porter accomplished here and how we have furthered our alliances and partnerships," said Cmdr. Joseph Hamilton, Porter's executive officer, "It has been a privilege to serve at the forefront of critical operations in the FDNF-E environment, and I am humbled to have served with the best crew in the Navy."

Porter is named for Commodore David Porter, and his son, Adm. David Dixon Porter, and is the fifth ship to bear his name. Commodore David Porter served in the Quasi War, First Barbary War, War of 1812 and in the West Indies. He took command of numerous ships, including the USS Constitution. He is known for first originating the saying, "Free Trade and Sailors Rights."

Adm. David Dixon Porter was the second U.S. Navy Officer to achieve the rank of Admiral, largely due to his service during the Civil War, where he played a vital role in the Battle of New Orleans and the Battle of Vicksburg. He also led the assault on Fort Fischer, the final significant naval contribution of the war. His service began with his time in the Mexican-American War and ended with his tenure as Superintendent of the Naval Academy, where he enacted a significant series of reforms, laying the groundwork for their current mission.

USS Porter is scheduled to return to its former homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, and will now continue to serve through an assignment to Destroyer Squadron 22.

Four U.S. Navy destroyers are based in Rota, Spain and are assigned to Commander, Task Force 65 in support of NATO's Integrated Air Missile Defense architecture. These FDNF-E ships have the flexibility to operate throughout the waters of Europe and Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Arctic Circle, demonstrating their mastery of the maritime domain.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy Reaches the North Pole

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) cuts a channel through the multi-year pack ice and snow as Healy transits the Arctic Ocean to the North Pole, Sept. 27, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Deborah Heldt Cordone, Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist 1*

NORTH POLE – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) reached the North Pole Friday after traversing the frozen Arctic Ocean, marking only the second time a U.S. ship has reached the location unaccompanied, the first being Healy in 2015, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Oct. 4 release.

Healy, a medium icebreaker, and crew departed Dutch Harbor, Alaska, Sept. 4, beginning its journey to reach latitude 90 degrees north. The cutter and crew supported oceanographic research in collaboration with National Science Foundation-funded scientists throughout their transit to the North Pole.

This is the third time Healy's traveled to the North Pole since its commissioning in 1999.

"The crew of Healy is proud to reach the North Pole," said Capt. Kenneth Boda, commanding officer of the Healy. "This rare opportunity is a highlight of our Coast Guard careers. We are honored to demonstrate Arctic operational capability and facilitate the study of this strategically important and rapidly changing region."

Healy is currently on a months-long, multi-mission deployment to conduct oceanographic research at the furthest reaches of the northern latitudes. The 420-foot icebreaker is the largest ship in the Coast Guard and is capable of breaking through four-and-half feet of ice at a continuous speed of three knots.

Healy, which departed its Seattle homeport on July 11, currently has thirty-four scientists and technicians from multiple universities and institutions aboard, and nearly 100 active duty crew members.

During the cutter's first Arctic leg of the patrol throughout July and August, Healy traveled into the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, going as far north as 78 degrees. As a part of the

Office of Naval Research’s Arctic Mobile Observing System program, Healy deployed underwater sensors, sea gliders and acoustic buoys to study Arctic hydrodynamics in the marginal and pack ice zones.

In addition to enabling Arctic science, Healy also supported U.S. national security objectives for the Arctic region by projecting a persistent ice-capable U.S. presence in U.S. Arctic waters, and patrolling our maritime border with Russia.

On its second Arctic mission of the summer, while transiting to the North Pole, Healy embarked a team of researchers as a part of the Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS). SAS is an international collaborative research program focused on using specially equipped research vessels from around the world to gather data throughout the Arctic across multiple scientific disciplines. Dr. Carin Ashjian, from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, is currently serving alongside Dr. Jackie Grebmeier as co-chief Scientists onboard Healy with support from the National Science Foundation.

Navy Fast-Tracks Contract for MQ-9 Reaper Advanced Network Pod

The MQ-9 Reaper provides Marines with a long-range intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability in support of expeditionary advanced based operations, littoral operations in contested environments, and maritime domain awareness. *U.S. MARINE CORPS*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy recently awarded an $8.4 million dollar contract to multiple vendors for the Marine Corps' MQ-9 Reaper Airborne Network Extension Skytower II (STII), the Naval Air Systems said Oct. 3.

Industry partners Global Air Logistics and Training, Northrop Grumman and L-3Harris will perform work to develop the first phase of STII, a network pod that will add an additional capability to support the MQ-9 Reaper's operational missions.

The Multi-Mission Tactical Unmanned Air System program office (PMA-266) awarded the contract under an Other Transaction Agreement/Authority, a contract vehicle used by the government to streamline research and development and prototype

development.

“This OTA allowed the contracts team to tailor the scope of the project and narrow down vendor capabilities by releasing a Statement of Need early on,” said Michelle Dutko, PMA-266’s STII team lead. “The OTA also provided the opportunity for the team to develop the statement of work with vendor input therefore streamlining the normal processing time to contract award.”

After the first phase of research and development is complete, the Navy and Marine Corps plan to prototype demo on surrogate aircraft and then prototype the system on an MQ-9A aircraft, Dutko said.

STII is required to execute the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance concept of operations by providing tactically relevant operational communications and data sharing capabilities at the tactical edge. It supports interoperability with existing STI capabilities to include multiple waveforms.

The Airborne Network Extension will have provisions to complement a collection of onboard sensors and off-board systems, and facilitate the retransmission, cross-banding and translation of data across gateway-connected networks. It will also enhance battlespace awareness and information sharing capabilities amongst the integrated Naval and Joint Force, connecting disparate networks and enabling the execution of mission-critical information exchange requirements.

The MQ-9 Reaper provides Marines with a long-range ISR capability in support of maritime domain awareness and expeditionary advanced based operations in contested environments. MQ-9s are scheduled to deploy with this new system in 2026.

US and Canada, Exercise in South China Sea to Support Japan Deployment

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76), center, cruises in formation with Izumo-class multi-purpose destroyer JS Izumo (DDH 183) left, and a Japanese submarine while conducting routine operations in the South China Sea, Oct. 1. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Donavan K. Patubo*

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Maritime forces from Canada, Japan and the United States concluded exercises in the South China Sea Oct. 1, demonstrating a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, said Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) led the exercise in support of their Indo-Pacific deployment,

The exercises included JMSDF's JS Izumo (DDH 183) and JS Takanami (DD 110). The multi-lateral training for the three maritime forces served to strengthen skills in maritime operations, anti-submarine warfare operations, air warfare operations, live-fire missile events, and advanced maneuvering scenarios.

"Through increased practical exercise, together we improved tactical capabilities and interoperability between the JMSDF, the U.S. Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy, and we promoted cooperative relationship of Japan-U.S.-Canadian naval forces in order to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific," said Rear Adm. Hirata Toshiyuki, commanding officer of Escort Flotilla 4.

Representing the U.S. Navy was Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76) and fleet replenishment-oiler USNS Rappahannock (T-AO 204).

"Participating in multinational operations over the last month provided a fantastic opportunity to work with our friends and allies in the South China Sea," said Cmdr. Joseph McGettigan, commanding officer of USS Higgins. "The seamless interoperability between all ships demonstrates the strength of our alliances and goes a long way to promote a free and open Indo-pacific. Thank you to the JMSDF for leading a well-run and professional operation!"

Canada was represented by HMCS Winnipeg (FFH 338) and HMCS Vancouver (FFH 331).

"It has been a pleasure to sail with our partners and allies over the past month," said Cmdr. Kevin Whiteside, HMCS Vancouver commanding officer. "Working together, we were able to leverage each other's experience and familiarity operating in the area and build upon it for follow-on deployments.

Supporting each other’s separate, yet similar, deployments to the Indo-Pacific demonstrates our common goal of supporting peace, security and prosperity in the region.”

Higgins is assigned to Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy’s largest forward-deployed DESRON and the U.S. 7th fleet’s principal surface force.

Navy’s VP-9 Conducts Harpoon Shot in Atlantic Thunder 2022

An AGM-84D Harpoon missile is deployed off the wing of the P-8A by VP-9 during Atlantic Thunder 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Joseph Reed*

SIGONELLA, Sicily – Patrol Squadron Nine (VP-9) recently had

the unique opportunity to participate in Atlantic Thunder 2022, a joint, multi-phase, multinational exercise designed to increase NATO interoperability and strengthen the United States-United Kingdom strategic partnership, the squadron said in a release.

The highlight of the exercise for VP-9 occurred with a coordinated time-on-target strike of the decommissioned Oliver Hazard Perry Class frigate USS Boone.

Various joint and multinational assets collaborated on the Hebrides Deep Sea Range off Scotland's northwest coast in order to achieve the exercise's main tactical objective, sinking the decommissioned USS Boone. Combat Air Crew Six (CAC-6) was selected to carry out the coordinated time on target strike portion of the exercise with the AGM-84D Harpoon, an anti-ship missile developed by Boeing. Among the other assets that joined CAC-6 and VP-9 in other phases of the exercise were the Royal Navy's HMS Westminster and its Agusta-Westland AW159 Wildcat Helicopter, three Royal Air Force Typhoons of the 41st Squadron, one U.S. Air Force McDonnell-Douglas F-15E Strike Eagle, and a U.S. Navy submarine. Additionally, range clearance safety was provided by other U.S. P-8As from VP-9's sister squadron, VP-46.

Atlantic Thunder 2022 proved to be a rousing success for all participants, as it not only accomplished all of its primary objectives and sunk the decommissioned USS Boone, but according to the U.K.'s after action report, the process "achieved several firsts for the U.K. and U.S. in terms of advanced warfighting techniques and delivering complex weapon effects against a realistic target."

Ultimately, the ship formerly known as the USS Boone stood no chance against the "remarkable amount of combined firepower within a short period."

First to hit the ex-Boone were two SM-6 missiles, courtesy of

the HMS Westminster. This was followed in short order by the coordinated Harpoon shot conducted by CAC-6 and the HMS Westminster. At precisely 1521Z, the AGM-84D Harpoon launched from the P-8A had a rendezvous with two surface launched AGM-84D Harpoons via the HMS Westminster into the hull of the ex-Boone. The HMS Westminster's portion of coordinated time on target strike included passive over-the-horizon-targeting generated by U.S. Naval Integrated Fires, marking the first time this type of targeting has ever been accomplished against a real life target with multinational collaboration.

Raymond O'Toole, Principle Deputy Director, Operational Test and Evaluation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense remarked on this coordinated targeting, saying, "What we've demonstrated through this exercise is a new capability – to gain and exchange information for targeting purposes."

Coordinated time on target shots such as the one conducted by CAC-6 and the HMS Westminster require precise multinational cooperation via detailed planning, communications, and tactical data link employment from multiple nations and services. Successful coordinated shots are remarkably effective in overwhelming a potential combatant's defenses by delivering rapid amounts of ordnance on target simultaneously and from multiple trajectories and domains.

"What we've seen in Atlantic Thunder today, is that with Royal Air Force, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, and Royal Navy all operating together [with] helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, ships, and a submarine, every one of which is capable of going to war tomorrow, we've proven it today for the first time in decades in the Atlantic," summed up Royal Navy Rear Adm. James Parkin.

Following VP-9's successful coordinated Harpoon shot with the HMS Westminster, the ex-Boone endured several more rounds of punishment from exercise participants. The three RAF Typhoons arrived in short order to deploy four Paveway IV precision

guided missiles onto ex-Boone. This was quickly followed by the Wildcat Helicopter's two Martlet missiles and shortly thereafter two Joint Direct Attack Munitions dropped by the F-15E Strike Eagle. The sub-launched munition and explosive ordnance disposal live charges delivered the final blow against the ex-Boone, sending her to the depths of the North Atlantic in over 6,500 feet of water.

Notably, the decommissioned USS Boone was prepared and configured specifically to meet stringent Environmental Protection Agency standards. This was done to mitigate potential adverse effects and keep risk to the environment as low as practicable. In addition to the ex-Boone's configuration, strict acoustic and visual monitoring from multiple sources on the range ensured that the risk posed by the exercise to marine mammals was extremely low.

VP-9's contribution to Atlantic Thunder 2022 was critical to the exercise's overall success and demonstrated the P-8A's and MPRF's ability to provide long range, coordinated strike capability in the maritime domain, with the added challenge of multi-national and multi-service planning and coordination.

Commanded by Cmdr. James J. Donchez, and based out of NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, the 279 Sailors assigned to VP-9 are currently deployed to the 6th Fleet area of responsibility and operate the P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

USNS Mercy Concludes Pacific Partnership 2022

Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) returns to San Diego, Sept. 30. Mercy participated in the 17th annual Pacific Partnership mission, the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted throughout the Indo-Pacific region. *U.S. NAVY / Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Rosa Paschall*

SAN DIEGO – Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) returned to its homeport Sept. 30 following completion of the 17th annual Pacific Partnership mission, U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs said in an Oct. 1 release.

Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

“It has truly been an honor to lead a diverse crew of committed men and women on the Pacific Partnership 2022 team,” said Pacific Partnership 2022 Mission Commander Capt. Hank Kim. “We set out to strengthen ties and create new friendships with our host and partner nations, and we achieved this with

resounding success.”

The mission team worked collectively with participating host and partner nations to enhance regional interchangeability and disaster response capabilities, increase security and stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships in the Indo-Pacific.

“One of the mission highlights was seeing the multinational knowledge exchange and passion for learning from everyone who was a part of Pacific Partnership,” said Capt. Jeffrey Feinberg, Mercy’s commanding officer. “Every participant brought something new to the table, whether it was a safer way to construct the foundation for a building, a new approach to a patient procedure, or a more efficient means for disaster response. That collaboration is what enhances every nation’s capacity to respond to crisis and provides an enduring impact. That, and the friendships we make, are what will remain long after Mercy returns home.”

Host nations included Vietnam, Palau, the Philippines, and Solomon Islands. Partner nations included Australia, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom.

Pacific Partnership saw more than 15,000 patients, completed 10 major construction projects, participated in more than 80 host nation outreach events, and conducted humanitarian assistance and disaster relief workshops in each mission stop during the five-month mission.