USS Whidbey Island Decommissioned after Nearly 38 Years of Service

A landing craft air cushion from Assault Craft Unit 2, currently embarked aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), passes the Spanish landing platform dock Castilla (L-52), during a bilateral Spanish Amphibious Landing Exercise, June 21. *U.S. NAVY / Petty Officer 1st Class Rachael L. Leslie*

NORFOLK – Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship namesake, USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41) held a decommissioning ceremony at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia, on July 22 before its inactivation next month, the Navy said in July 25 release.

The ship's decommissioning ceremony was held on the quay wall, alongside the moored USS Whidbey Island. The ceremony was attended by nine of her previous commanding officers and over 50 plankowners. "The last crew of Whidbey Island performed with great dignity and resiliency," said Cmdr. Matt Phillips,

the ship’s final commanding officer. “It’s been a privilege and an honor to lead this crew in executing her final mission.”

Whidbey Island was commissioned Feb. 9, 1985, at Lockheed Shipyard in Seattle. The first ship in a class designed specifically to interface with the landing craft, air cushion, assisted in the operational and developmental testing of the amphibious assault craft from July to September 1985 and again in May and July 1986.

Whidbey Island was the first amphibious ship from the East Coast to deploy to the European Theater with LCACs. In September and October 1989, it participated in Hurricane Hugo disaster relief operations in the Caribbean Sea.

In August 1994, Whidbey Island rescued and transported over 8,100 Cuban migrants from the Straits of Florida during Operation Able Vigil and participated in the restoration of the legitimate government to Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy.

In June 2006, Whidbey Island deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While in-port Aqaba, Jordan in July of 2006, the ship was recalled through the Suez Canal to support contingency operations due to the crisis in Lebanon. Whidbey Island subsequently participated in the largest non-combatant evacuation conducted by the U.S. Navy since Vietnam. During July and August, the ship evacuated 817 American citizens via LCAC with personnel transport module.

On Feb. 16, 2007, Whidbey Island was awarded the 2006 Battle “E” award.

On June 24, 2016, USS Whidbey Island deployed from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, for what would be its final deployment. It conducted eight Theater Security Port Visits, country visits vital to reassuring host nations of the commitment of the United States to their partnership. On July

21, 2016, USS Whidbey Island transited the Bosphorus Strait during a time of tension following the failed 2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt.

Rear Adm. Tom Williams, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 2 presided over the ceremony, which included the remaining ship's crew, several of its previous commanding officers, including the ship's first commanding officer, Captain Pat Muldoon and many other special guests in attendance.

"I am humbled to be with you on this bittersweet day as we gather here at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story to commemorate this ship's near 38 years of commissioned service," said Williams.

HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding Awarded DDG(X) Design Engineering Contract

An aerial image of HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding. Ingalls was awarded a design engineering contract from the Navy for the Next-Generation Guided-Missile Destroyer program. *HII*

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division has been awarded a cost-plus-incentive-fee contract for engineering and design from the U.S. Navy for the next-generation guided-missile destroyer (DDG(X)) program, the company said July 22.

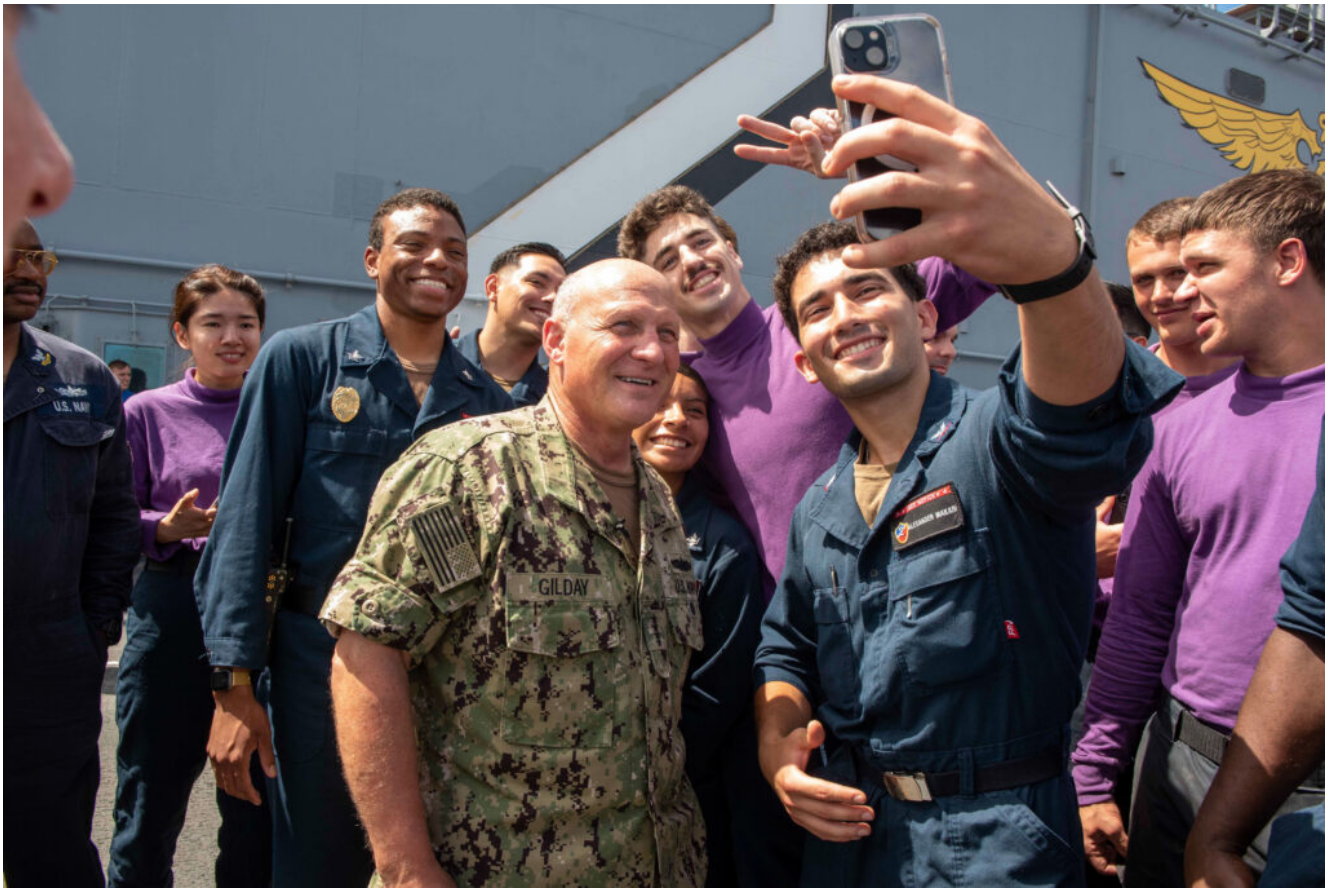
"We are excited to continue on this path with our Navy and industry partners," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. "It provides us a tremendous opportunity to bring best practices and innovation from our experienced engineering team to the design of this important future surface combatant."

Ingalls Shipbuilding is a major contractor and shipbuilding partner in the Arleigh Burke-class (DDG 51) program that has been in production for three decades. Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are multi-mission ships that can provide offensive and defensive capabilities, and can conduct a variety of

operations, from peacetime presence and crisis management to sea control and power projection, all in support of the United States military strategy.

DDG(X) will be the next generation large surface combatant for the U.S. Navy, and is being designed by a Navy-industry collaborative team consisting of the Navy and both large surface combatant shipbuilders.

CNO Travels to RIMPAC, Meets with Exercise Participants



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday meets with Sailors aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2) during Rim of the Pacific 2022, July 21. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Amanda R. Gray*

HONOLULU – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday traveled to Hawaii June 20-23 to visit participants of the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, the CNO's public affairs office said July 23.

Gilday visited several U.S. and partner nation ships, where he spoke with Sailors and observed the ongoing exercise.

"RIMPAC is the premier international maritime exercise and the largest multinational exercise," Gilday said. "The complex warfighting exercise in this unique training environment across all combat domains strengthens our ability to work together, hone our skills and foster trust among nations."

"Building interchangeability among like-minded allies and partners demonstrates our solidarity, RIMPAC truly demonstrates the value of maritime partnership," he said.

While on Oahu, Gilday met with U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Adm. John Aquilino and U.S. 3rd Fleet and RIMPAC 2022 Commander Vice Adm. Michael Boyle.

Gilday also spent multiple days underway aboard ships participating in the exercise. He visited USS Essex (LHD 2), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter destroyer JS Izumo (DDH-183) and the Republic of Korea navy amphibious assault ship ROKS Marado (LPH 6112), to thank Sailors, meet with leadership and observe the exercise first-hand.

Gilday met with Commander of Combined Task Force (CTF) 176, Republic of Korea Rear Adm. Sangmin An, when he was aboard Essex. Additionally, he met with vice commander of Combined Task Force for RIMPAC, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Rear Adm. Toshiyuki Hirata, while aboard the Izumo.

"Complex combined operations drive readiness, build confidence, and enhance interoperability among a diverse and highly capable international team," Gilday said. "We are

joined in our commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific."

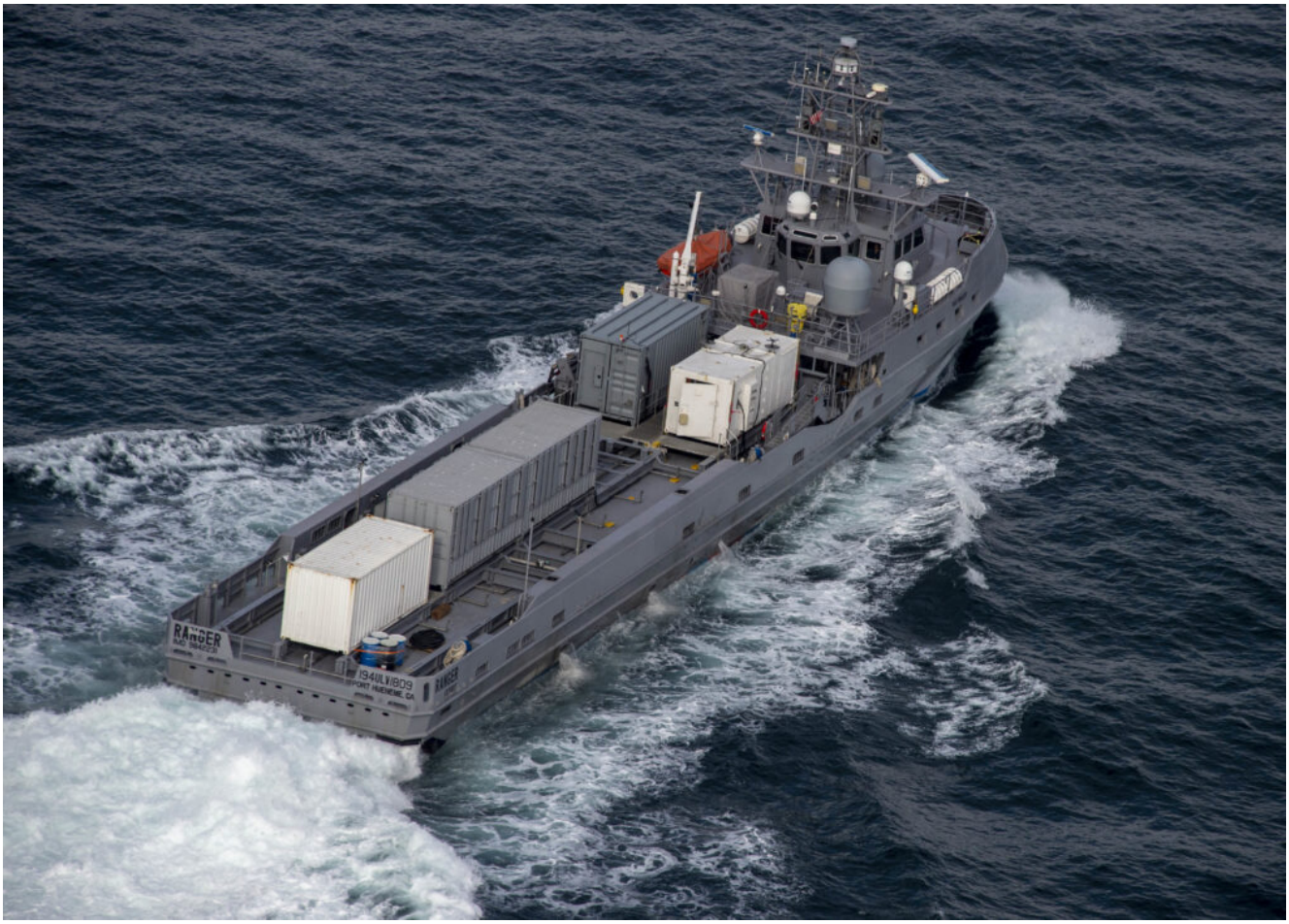
Unmanned systems are being used in different ways from humanitarian assistance to high-end warfighting. This year, more than 30 experiments were planned using multiple unmanned platforms from U.S. and partner nations.

"We need to continue to put ourselves in a position where we can scale and really make unmanned assets on, below and above the sea an important part of the fleet," said Gilday. "Unmanned systems provide Sailors with cutting edge capability now and into the future. It's no longer a luxury. It's a necessity if we want to operate in a distributed manner."

In its 28th iteration, the biennial event is the world's largest international maritime exercise, providing a unique training opportunity to foster and sustain cooperative relationships critical to ensuring security on the world's oceans. Capabilities exercised during RIMPAC range from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex warfighting.

This was Gilday's first time attending RIMPAC as CNO.

Four Unmanned Surface Vessels Being Demonstrated in RIMPAC



The large unmanned surface vessel Ranger transits the Pacific Ocean to participate in Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tyler R. Fraser*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Four prototype unmanned surface vessels are participating in the Rim of the Pacific 2022 exercise, known as RIMPAC, delivering warfighting capabilities and extending the reach of the manned U.S. fleet with fewer risks to the warfighter, Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants Public Affairs said July 22.

Though unmanned systems have participated in exercises before, the involvement of four different vehicles, operating both autonomously and by manned teams, is a major milestone.

The vessels – Seahawk, Sea Hunter, Nomad and Ranger – will execute a range of missions. The prototypes will work side-by-side with exercise participants, carrying payloads, providing intelligence, and most significantly, gathering data in a real-world environment to determine how they will function in

the larger fleet.

The significance of the occasion is not lost on Navy Capt. Scot Searles, program manager of the Unmanned Maritime Systems (PMS 406) program office.

“The integration of autonomous USVs with manned combatants will give fleet commanders much-needed enhancements to maritime domain awareness, thereby increasing decision speed and lethality in surface warfare.” Searles said.

PMS 406, the office responsible for the participating RIMPAC prototypes, is a program office within the Program Executive Office, Unmanned and Small Combatants.

“While our prototyping efforts have grown and matured significantly in the last four years, their performance in the RIMPAC exercise marks another significant milestone in manned-unmanned teams.” Searles said.

The manned-unmanned team, in the case of RIMPAC, will include service members and civilians supporting the mission from various organizations all over the country.

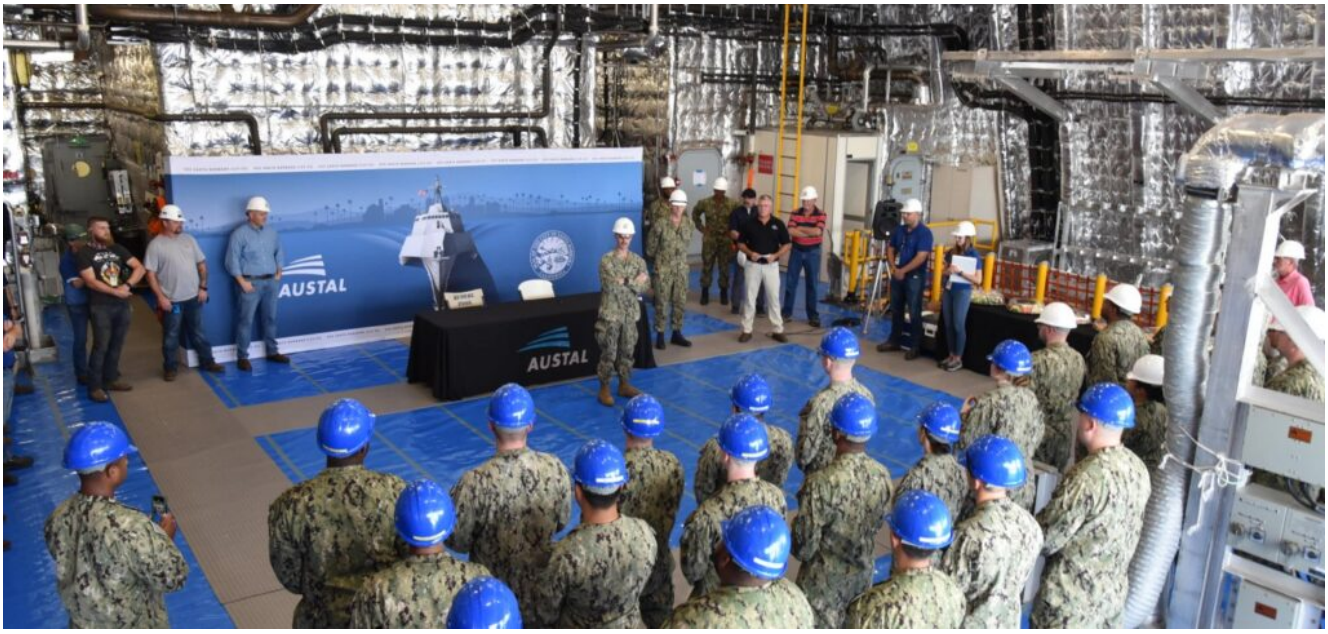
The PMS 406 assets participating in RIMPAC are the Overlord unmanned surface vehicles, Nomad and Ranger, and the medium unmanned surface vehicles, Sea Hunter and Seahawk. Though primarily operated and maintained under the control of PMS 406, personnel from Unmanned Surface Vessel Division One within Surface Development Squadron One control much of the practical execution.

RIMPAC is the largest joint maritime exercise in the world. Lasting over five weeks and spanning massive areas in the Pacific Ocean, the exercise will include hundreds of ships, submarines and aircraft, along with over 25,000 personnel.

Brian Fitzpatrick, PMS 406 principal assistant program manager for unmanned surface vessels, said, “RIMPAC is an incredible

opportunity to not only show that we can develop these vessels, but we're also showing the Navy's commitment to unmanned and manned teams."

Austal USA Delivers the Future USS Santa Barbara to the U.S. Navy



Austal USA delivered the future USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32) to the U.S. Navy on July 21. *AUSTAL USA*

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA delivered the future USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32) to the U.S. Navy on July 21, the company said July 22. LCS 32 is the 16th Independence–variant littoral combat ship delivered by the company.

Delivery documents were signed on board the ship and followed the successful completion of acceptance trials during which the ship's major systems and equipment were tested to demonstrate mission readiness. The ship's pre-commissioning

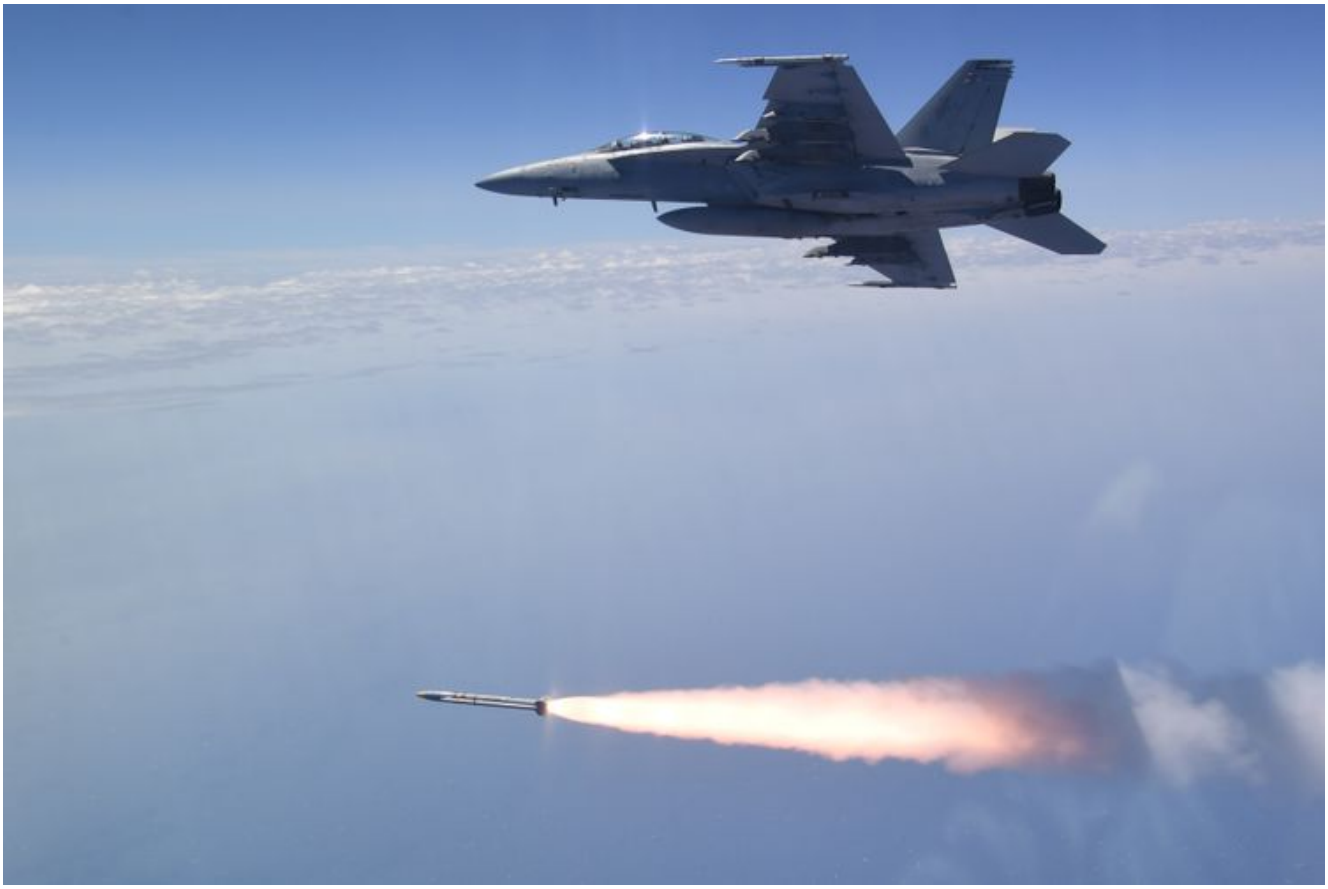
unit will now prepare the ship for fleet introduction.

“Delivering the future USS Santa Barbara is a proud moment for Austal USA shipbuilders who worked extensively with Navy teammates and suppliers from across the nation to produce a capability that will serve our country for years to come,” said Rusty Murdaugh, president of Austal USA. “The fact that we’re delivering that capability on time and on schedule demonstrates our commitment to the warfighter and our nation’s defense.”

LCS are built to operate in near-shore environments and support forward presence, maritime security, sea control and deterrence missions. Several Austal USA built Independence-variant LCS have deployed to the western Pacific within the last year including USS Jackson (LCS 6), USS Tulsa (LCS 16) and USS Charleston (LCS 18).

Austal USA is currently constructing three LCS including the recently launched future USS Augusta (LCS 34). Final assembly is underway on the future USS Kingsville (LCS 36) and modules are under construction for the future USS Pierre (LCS 38).

Navy F/A-18 Launches AARGM-ER for Third Live-Fire Test



Northrop Grumman's Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile Extended Range (AARGM-ER) is launched from a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet. *U.S. NAVY*

LOS ANGELES – Northrop Grumman Corp. successfully completed the third live fire test of its AGM-88G Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile Extended Range (AARGM-ER), the company said July 21.

The U.S. Navy launched the missile from an F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft recently at the Point Mugu Sea Range off the coast of California. Utilizing its advanced emitter acquisition system, the missile detected a land-based threat and engaged the threat system.

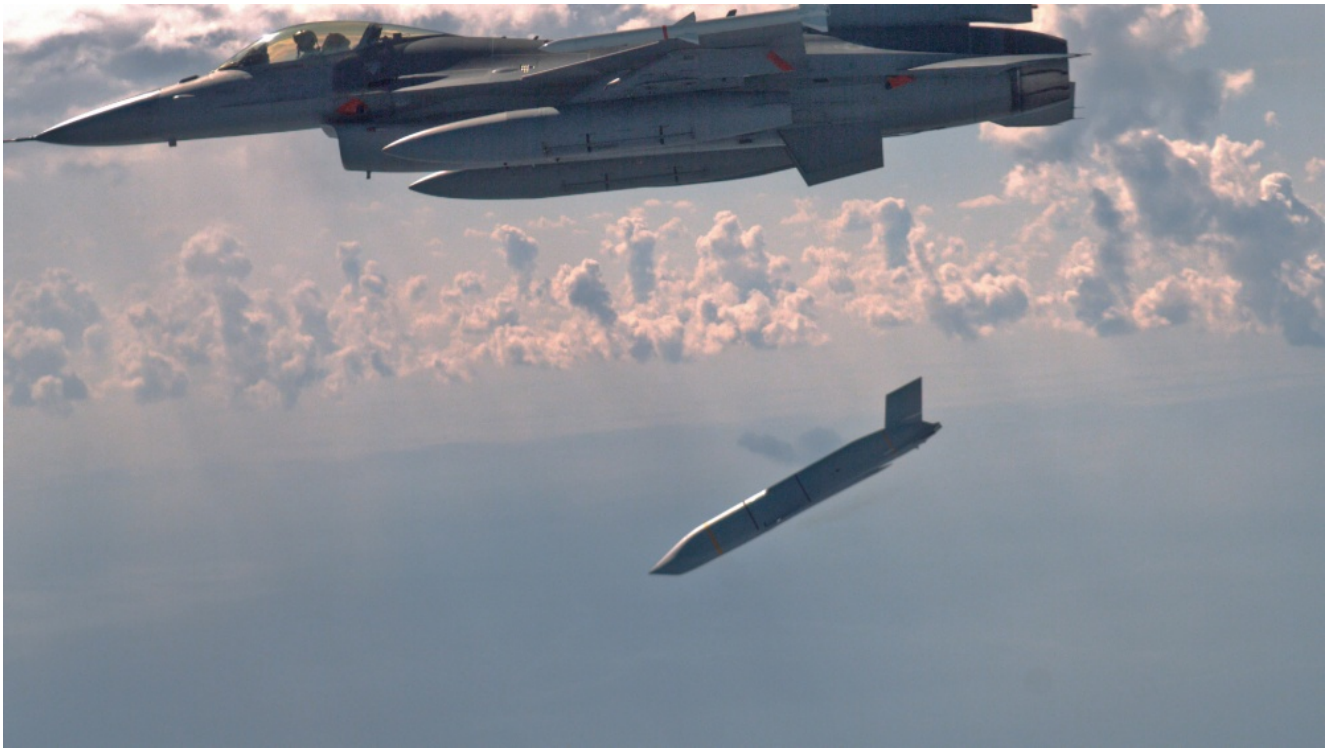
"The Navy requirement for AARGM-ER is now," said Captain A.C. Dutko, Navy program manager for Direct and Time Sensitive Strike (PMA-242). "AARGM-ER performed as expected and detected, identified, located and engaged a land-based air defense radar system. The continued success of our developmental testing moves the program closer to fielding and providing the aircrews with the protection they need to remain

ahead of adversary threats.”

Since achieving a Milestone C Decision in September 2021, AARGM-ER prime contractor Northrop Grumman has continued to lead its industry team in timely development of critically needed warfighting capability. LRIP Lot 1 AARGM-ER missiles are currently in-production to support initial operational capability fielding. LRIP Lot 2 missiles, under contract, will further augment the inventory in the fleet.

AARGM-ER is being integrated on the Navy F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler aircraft as well as the F-35 aircraft.

State Dept. Approves Possible Sale of JASSM-ER Missiles to Australia



Maj. Jacob Rohrbach, a pilot assigned to the 40th Flight Test Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, releases the first Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile – Extended Range from an F-16 over the Gulf of Mexico on Sept. 19, 2018. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Master Sgt. Michael Jackson*

WASHINGTON – The State Department has approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to the government of Australia of Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles – Extended Range (JASSM ER) and related equipment for an estimated cost of $235 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said July 21.

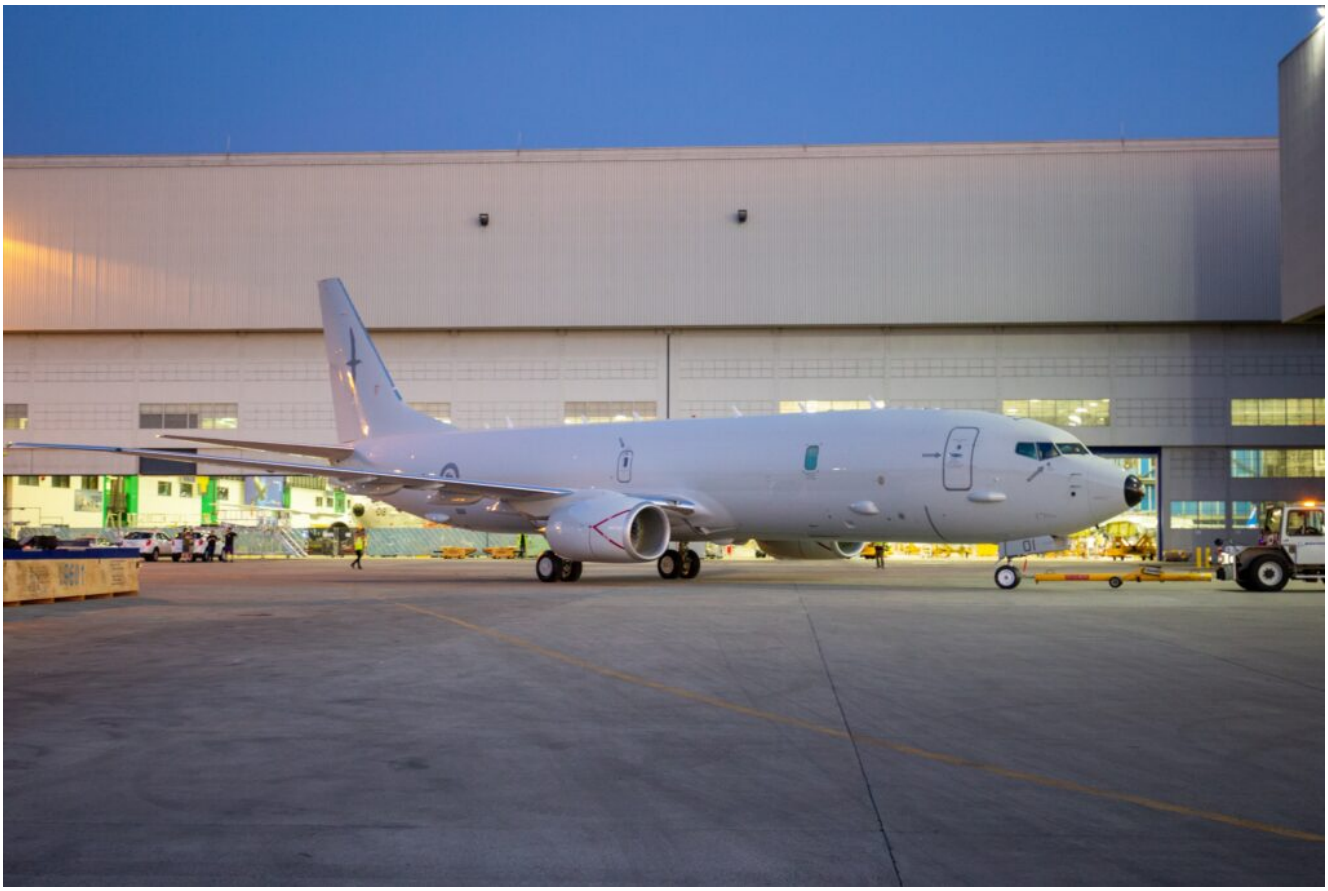
Australia has requested 80 JASSM ERs (AGM-158B with telemetry kits and/or AGM-158B-2 configurations).

“Also included are missile containers and support equipment; JASSM training missiles; weapon system support; spare parts, consumables, accessories, and repair/return support; integration and test support and equipment; personnel training; software delivery and support; classified and unclassified publications and technical documentation; transportation; U.S. government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services, studies and surveys; and other related elements of logistical and program support,” the release said.

“The proposed sale will improve Australia’s capability to meet current and future threats by providing advanced, long-range strike systems for employment from Royal Australian Air Force air platforms including, but not limited to, the F/A-18F Super Hornet and F-35A Lightning II,” the announcement said.

The principal contractor will be Lockheed Martin, Orlando, Florida.

New Zealand’s First Boeing P-8A Poseidon Rolls Out of Paint Shop



Boeing debuted the first P-8A Poseidon aircraft for New Zealand on July 21. *BOEING*

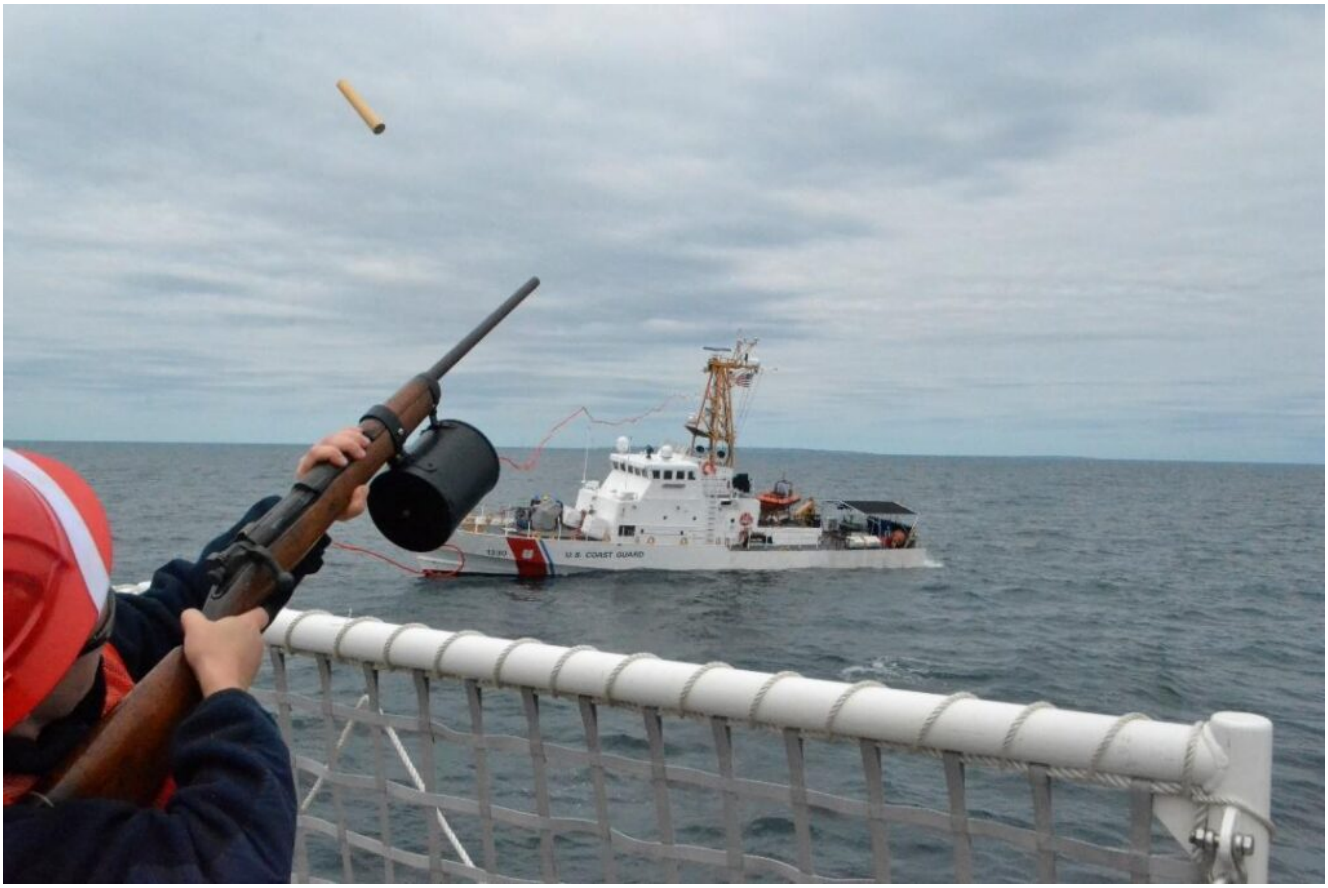
RENTON, Wash. – Boeing debuted on July 21 the first P-8A Poseidon aircraft for New Zealand in its Royal New Zealand Air Force livery, the company said in a release. New Zealand is one of eight nations to have acquired the P-8 as their new multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft.

“The aircraft features the iconic Kiwi roundel, a native bird to New Zealand,” said Sheena Vince Cruz, Boeing P-8 Asia-Pacific region program manager. “Although flightless, the Kiwi bird is recognizable and will continue ‘flying’ as a symbol on the P-8A for decades to come.”

The New Zealand government purchased four Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft that will eventually replace the current fleet of six aging P-3K2 Orion aircraft. The P-8As will provide advanced capabilities to maintain situational awareness in neighboring waters on and below the surface of the ocean.

First flight is scheduled in the coming weeks followed by mission systems installation. The aircraft is scheduled to be delivered to the New Zealand Ministry of Defence later this year.

Coast Guard Cutter Seneca Returns to Homeport Following 54-Day Patrol



Petty Officer 3rd Class Vincent Isaiah Pangelinan, a Gunner's Mate aboard Coast Guard Cutter Seneca, fires the messenger line to pass the towing line to CGC Tybee during a towing evolution off the coast of Massachusetts. A messenger line is used to assist in heaving the mooring to the shore or to another ship. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Miller*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The USCGC Seneca (WMEC 906) returned to homeport in Portsmouth July 21 after a 54-day deployment in the North Atlantic Ocean, the Coast Guard 5th District said July 22.

The Seneca crew supported the U.S. Coast Guard 1st District as they conducted a series of commercial fishing vessel boardings from New York to Maine to ensure compliance with federal safety, fisheries, and environmental regulations. The boardings conducted by Seneca's crew resulted in 17 notices of violation and two voyage terminations.

"This rewarding patrol showcased the devotion and hard work of an amazing crew," said Cmdr. James F. McCormack, commanding

officer of Seneca. “The crew exhibited selfless service during a high-tempo patrol. The 53 boardings promoted safety at sea and sustainability of marine life for generations to come. Our presence strengthens trust between the Coast Guard and the fishing fleet, while setting the standard for Coast Guard operations in the North Atlantic Ocean.”

Additionally, the Seneca’s crew responded to seven search and rescue cases, three of which resulted in lives saved or assisted.

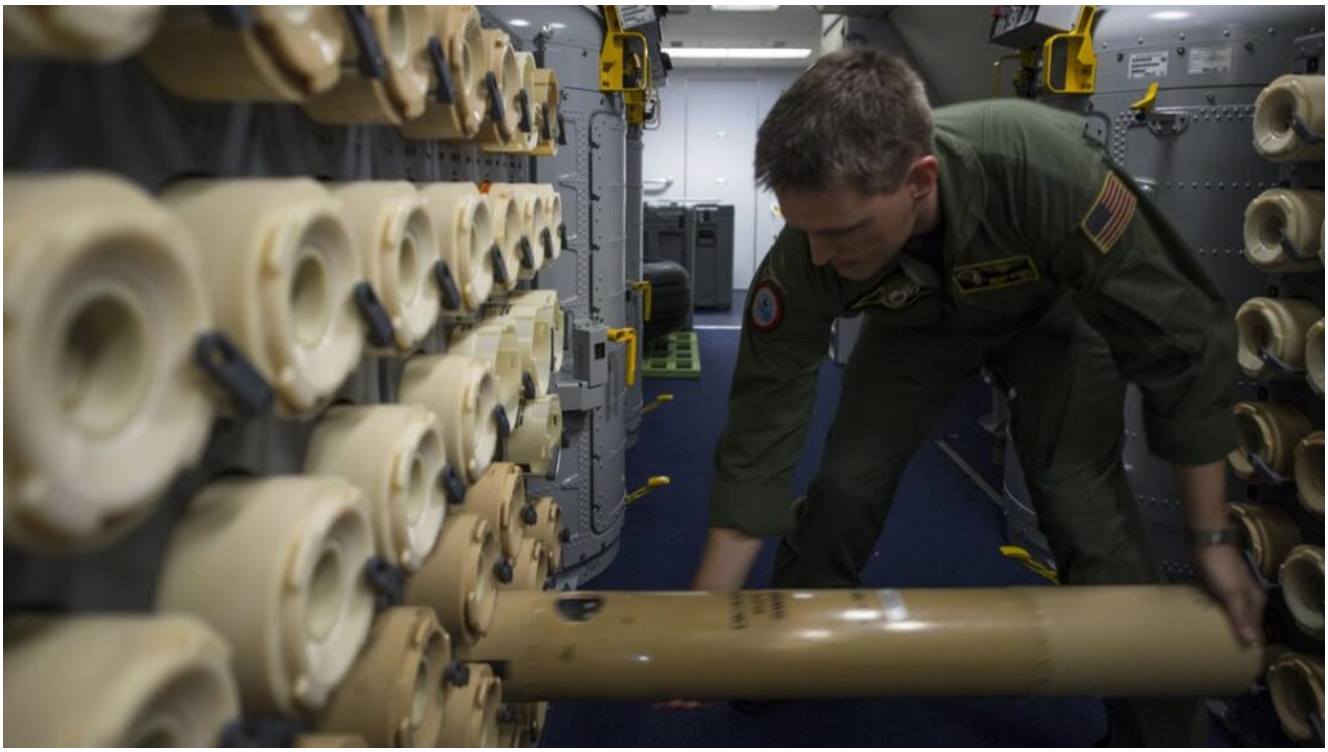
During one of the search and rescue cases, the crew of Seneca worked in partnership with a Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod MH-60T helicopter crew to medically evacuate two critically injured people from a sailing vessel 350 nautical miles offshore. The Seneca crew also rescued the two remaining stranded sailors.

During a second search and rescue case, the cutter crew rendered assistance and towed a disabled fishing vessel 70 miles.

The Seneca is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth with 100 crew members. The cutter’s primary missions include search and rescue, living marine resources, illegal drug interdictions, counter narcotics, migrant interdictions, ensuring the safety of life at sea and enforcing international and domestic maritime laws in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

NAVAIR Awards Multiple Award

Delivery Order for Sonobuoys



A Sailor loads an “A sized” sonobuoy, which is encased in a standard Sonobuoy Launch Case. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Air Anti-Submarine Warfare Systems Program (PMA-264) awarded a multiple award delivery order contract for production sonobuoys Naval Air Systems Command said July 20.

A MADOC is a special type of indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contract with multiple awardees. This format provides a marketplace for qualified vendors to compete for annual quantities of production sonobuoys. The MADOC sonobuoy production ordering period will begin in fiscal 2023 and continue through fiscal 2027 for the U.S. Navy, international cooperative partners and foreign military sales customers. The contract will also be used to replenish sonobuoys expended in daily antisubmarine operations while maintaining inventory levels as required by the Navy munitions requirement process.

“This unique contract award is critical to the future of sonobuoy production,” said Capt. Dennis Lloyd, Anti-Submarine Warfare Systems program manager. “Sonobuoys are essential to

the execution of air ASW mission within the US Navy and our allies. It is a testament to our team that these awards occurred in such a timely manner.”

The MADOC approach allows for long-term competitive dynamics and an environment to help foster and maintain the industrial base by opening up delivery order competitions to all qualifying offerors. This is to encourage new entrants, with qualified sonobuoys, to continuously enter the marketplace throughout the duration of the contract.

Sonobuoy qualification occurs by way of other transaction authority allowing the Department of Defense to carry out prototypes, research and more. For sonobuoy development and production, the OTA process enables companies the opportunity to build and qualify independent designs and production lines of all sonobuoys variants without disrupting current supply.

PMA-264 is responsible for the manufacturing and delivery of sonobuoys. They are air launched expendable, electro-mechanical ASW acoustic sensors designed to relay underwater sounds associated with ships and submarines to sophisticated remote processors principally on P-3C Orion, P-8A Poseidon, and MH-60R Seahawk aircraft.