USCGC Mohawk Returns from Eastern Pacific Patrol, Conducts International Collaboration

The USCGC Mohawk (WMEC 913) hosts senior officials from the coast guard, navy, and marines of Ecuador for a professional exchange on Nov. 28, 2021, at sea off Ecuador. The Famous-class medium endurance cutter returned to homeport in Key West Sunday after completing a groundbreaking 45-day deployment to the Eastern Pacific Ocean. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

KEY WEST, Florida — The Famous-class medium endurance cutter USCGC Mohawk (WMEC 913) returned to homeport in Key West Dec. 19 after completing a groundbreaking 45-day deployment to the Eastern Pacific Ocean, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area said Dec. 20.

While on patrol, the Mohawk crew disrupted illegal narcotics

smuggling, interdicting more than 3,200 pounds of cocaine. The team conducted joint training missions with crews from Panama and Ecuador to strengthen regional partnerships in the Western Hemisphere.

Patrolling in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South, the Mohawk team interdicted a low-profile drug smuggling vessel with approximately 3,200 pounds of cocaine aboard and apprehended three suspected narcotics smugglers. These low-profile vessels are purpose-built to evade detection and transport illicit contraband across thousand-mile stretches of ocean. The drugs, worth more than $60 million, were seized in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean off the coast of Ecuador. While in theater, Mohawk aided in stopping 17 suspected drug smugglers, contributing directly to U.S. Southern Command objectives to combat transnational criminal organizations.

During the Mohawk’s deployment, the crew took multiple opportunities to strengthen ties with partner nations in the region, including conducting joint rescue and assistance drills, exchanging law enforcement and boarding techniques, and practicing towing with Panamanian Servicio Nacional Aeronaval vessels. Mohawk’s crew also completed a passing exercise with the Armada del Ecuador offshore patrol vessel LAE Isla San Cristobal (LG 30) and conducted a two-day joint counter-narcotics patrol through Ecuador’s exclusive economic zone in the Galápagos Islands.

“International partnerships are critical to detecting and deterring illicit narcotics smuggling; engagements such as these with foreign partners enhance interoperability and interdiction capabilities,” said Cmdr. Andrew Pate, commanding officer of the Mohawk.

Mohawk made history during its deployment as the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit and anchor in the Galápagos Islands. The islands are a province of Ecuador and a UNESCO

World Heritage site, made famous for species diversity and unique terrain. While at anchor in San Cristobal, Galápagos, Mohawk conducted a professional exchange with senior ranking officials from Armada del Ecuador, held joint law enforcement training, enjoyed a cultural exchange ashore, and took part in a friendly U.S. versus Ecuador game of soccer.

“The U.S. Coast Guard’s ability to forge strong and lasting international partnerships that further the national interest is what makes us such a unique instrument of national security. I am very proud of the Mohawk crew for their work as envoys of the U.S. Coast Guard. The opportunity to work alongside the maritime professionals of Ecuador and Panama during this deployment, as well as our interdiction success sends a strong signal to transnational criminal organizations that the United States values enduring commitments in the region,” Pate said. “Our interactions with the Armada del Ecuador in Galápagos left a profound impression on my crew. Choosing to go to sea and serve on a U.S. Coast Guard cutter opens the door to experiences and camaraderie that you don’t get in a normal nine to five job.”

While underway, the cutter’s crew completed aviation, damage control, engineering, seamanship, navigation, and combat systems training to maintain operational readiness and prepare for future multi-mission deployments.

Commissioned in March of 1991, Mohawk is the 13th and final of the 270-foot Famous-class cutters built. The medium endurance cutters fall under the command of the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Based in Portsmouth, Virginia, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, they also allocate ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

AUSTAL Places Order for Floating Dry Dock

SAN DIEGO – Immediately after finalizing a deal on a new repair facility in the Port of San Diego, Austal USA placed an order for a floating dry dock. The new floating dry dock, optimized to efficiently dock small surface combatants and similar sized ships, will be the centerpiece of the new repair facility.

“This dry dock will greatly enhance Austal’s ability to provide the Navy and other customers a highly capable full-service repair facility located in the homeport of San Diego,” Austal USA President Rusty Murdaugh said. “It will be invaluable to our customers, and we are eager to satisfy their growing demand for West coast repair facilities that include dry docks.”

The dry dock will have a 9,000 light ton lifting capacity. It will be 531 feet (162 meters) long, 154 feet (47 meters) wide, with a maximum draft of 36 feet (11 meters). Construction on the dry dock began today and the completed vessel is scheduled to be fully operational in Austal’s new San Diego repair facility by August 2023.

This contract is one of several milestones Austal USA has achieved over the last several weeks to grow the capability and capacity of its Services business. The acquisition of the San Diego facility and the dry dock, combined with recent contract awards, further cement Austal USA’s role in maintaining and repairing ships throughout the United States and INDOPACOM region.

U.S. Navy, Boeing Complete First Carrier Tests for MQ-25

An MQ-25 Stingray test asset conducts deck handling maneuvers Dec. 12 while underway aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN -77). This unmanned carrier aviation demonstration marked the first time the Navy conducted testing with the MQ-25 at sea. *U.S. NAVY*

NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S. Navy and Boeing have successfully maneuvered the Boeing-owned T1 test asset on a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier for the first time, an early step forward in ensuring the MQ-25 unmanned aerial refueler will seamlessly integrate into carrier operations.

During an underway demonstration aboard the USS George H.W.

Bush (CVN 77), Navy flight deck directors – known as “yellow shirts” – used standard hand signals to direct T1 just like any other carrier-based aircraft. Instead of a pilot receiving the commands, however, it was a Boeing MQ-25 Deck Handling Operator (DHO) right beside the yellow shirt who commanded the aircraft using a new handheld deck control device.

“This is another significant step forward in demonstrating MQ-25’s integration into the Carrier Air Wing on the flight deck of our fleet’s aircraft carriers,” said Capt. Chad Reed, Unmanned Carrier Aviation program manager. “The success of this event is a testament to the hard work of our engineers, testers, operators and the close collaboration and teaming from Naval Air Force Atlantic and the crew aboard CVN 77.”

The demonstration was intended to ensure the design of the MQ-25 will successfully integrate into the carrier environment and to evaluate the functionality, capability and handling qualities of the deck handling system both in day and night conditions. Maneuvers included taxiing on the deck, connecting to the catapult, clearing the landing area and parking on the deck.

“The Navy has a rigorous, well-established process for moving aircraft on the carrier. Our goal was to ensure the MQ-25 fits into the process without changing it,” said Jim Young, MQ-25 chief engineer. “From the design of the aircraft to the design of the system moving it, our team has worked hard to make the MQ-25 carrier suitable in every way.”

DHO’s trained in Boeing’s deck handling simulation lab in St. Louis, where they practiced entering commands from simulated yellow shirts into the real handheld device. A simulated MQ-25, running the aircraft’s real operational flight code and interfaces, would move accordingly. The handheld controller is a simple, easy-to-use device designed specifically for a generation of sailors who natively understand such handheld technology and have experience with controllers used in the

gaming industry today.

The deck handling demonstration followed a two-year flight test campaign for the Boeing-owned T1 test asset, during which the Boeing and Navy team refueled three different carrier-based aircraft – an F/A-18 Super Hornet, an E-2D Hawkeye and an F-35C Lightning II.

“The Navy gave us two key performance parameters for the program – aerial refueling and integration onto the carrier deck,” said Dave Bujold, Boeing MQ-25 program director. “We’ve shown that the MQ-25 can meet both requirements, and we’ve done it years earlier than traditional acquisition programs.”

MQ-4C Triton UAS Arrives in Florida as Australian Triton Takes Shape

The Navy’s MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft arrived in Mayport, Florida, Dec. 16, as part of early operational capability efforts. *U.S. NAVY*

MAYPORT, Fla. — The Navy’s MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system arrived in Mayport, Florida, Dec. 16, following its initial deployment in the Pacific theater, the office of Commander, Naval Force Atlantic said Dec. 17.

This air vehicle was one of two MQ-4C Triton UAS that operated from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, after completing their first rotational deployment to Japan Oct. 12, 2021.

“The MQ-4C Triton demonstrates the significance of manned and unmanned integration to support national security interests,” said Cmdr. Brian Conlan, commander, Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19. “The VUP-19 and MQ-4C Triton deployment to the 7th Fleet area of responsibility provided an opportunity to apply and refine the tactics, techniques, and procedures to expand our concept of operations and inform planning for future deployments around the world.”

VUP-19, the first Triton UAS squadron, operates and maintains two aircraft as part of an early operational capability to further refine the concept of operations, including expeditionary basing, and complement manned systems to better locate, identify, and track contacts of interest in the maritime domain.

The MQ-4 Triton’s arrival at Naval Station Mayport will support unit-level training and preparation for the next variant of MQ-4C.

The Navy conducted its first test flight of the MQ-4C Triton in its upgraded hardware and software configuration, known as integrated functional capability 4, July 29 at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland. IFC-4 brings an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy’s maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting transition plan.

The MQ-4C Triton conducts intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions that pair with the P-8A Poseidon and it brings increased persistence, capability, and capacity through its multi-sensor mission payload.

Australia’s first MQ-4C Triton fuselage is lowered onto the unique one-piece wing. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

Australian MQ-4C Triton Takes Shape

Meanwhile, Northrop Grumman Corp. recently completed a significant milestone in the production of Australia’s first MQ-4C Triton when the aircraft fuselage was mounted onto Triton’s unique one-piece wing, the company said. Once completed and delivered, Triton’s powerful payload and endurance will provide the Royal Australian Air Force the ability to detect and analyze threats that were previously undetectable.

“This production milestone further demonstrates our commitment to both sides of the cooperative program between the Royal Australian Air Force and the U.S. Navy,” said Rho Cauley-Bruner, Triton program manager at Northrop Grumman. “We are on schedule to deliver Triton’s powerful capability in support of Australia’s national security.”

Australia’s first Triton is on track to be delivered just as

the U.S. Navy expects to achieve initial operating capability with its multi-intelligence Tritons, the same configuration Australia is receiving. The identical capabilities will allow the RAAF and U.S. Navy to share data and maintain an unblinking autonomous intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting capability over some of the world's most critical maritime regions.

"I am looking forward to seeing our first Triton roll off the production line and then commence flying in Australian skies in 2024," said Group Captain Jason Lind, director of Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare at RAAF headquarters. "This capability will extend Australia's ability to see and understand our maritime approaches to the north and also as far south as Antarctica."

PEO Columbia Recognized for Acquisition Excellence

NAVSEA’s PMS 397 Columbia Class Submarine Program team photo for the Packard Award. *U.S. NAVY / Laura Lakeway*

WASHINGTON – Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks named the Columbia-class submarine program office (PMS 397) winner of the 2021 David Packard Acquisition Excellence Award during the virtual 2021 Defense Acquisition Workforce Awards on Dec. 15.

The Columbia-class submarine program is developing the follow-on to the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) which currently serve as the cornerstone for the nation’s strategic deterrence force. The David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award recognizes Department of Defense acquisition programs and their teams that have demonstrated exemplary acquisition excellence, innovation and reform.

“Our winners this year are the best of the best among our nation’s public service professionals,” said Hicks, adding that the work of the department’s acquisition professionals “is vital to supporting our nation’s military.”

The Columbia-class submarine program stood out from other DoD acquisition efforts by developing and executing acquisition, contracting, supply chain, workforce development and sustainment improvements. The Columbia-class team negotiated and awarded the first modern-era, two-submarine purchase for the first and second-of-class submarines.

“Traditionally, we buy the first-of-class submarine under a single contract. With Columbia, though, we’re confident that we can project the total costs for both the first and second hulls and therefore put both PCU Columbia (SSBN 826) and the SSBN 827 on a single contract to maximize efficiencies and help ensure the on-time delivery of these national assets. In doing so, we avoided about $1.5 billion in costs,” said Rear Adm. Scott Pappano, Program Executive Officer, Strategic Submarines.

According to Columbia-class program manager, Capt. Jonathan Rucker, “As the Department of Defense’s highest-priority acquisition program, the Columbia team and its industry partners continue to design, build, test, and sustain the nation’s high quality, sea-based strategic deterrent on schedule within budget. The program continues to try to be a leader within the acquisition community executing program efforts and supporting other programs through the acquisition community.”

Pre-commissioning unit Columbia is scheduled to deliver in 2027 and conduct its first strategic deterrence patrol in 2030.

USS Portland Tests High Energy Laser Weapon System in Gulf of Aden

Amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland (LPD 27) conducts a high-energy laser weapon system demonstration on a static surface training target Dec. 14 while sailing in the Gulf of Aden. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Staff Sgt. Donald Holbert*

MANAMA, Bahrain – Amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland (LPD 27) conducted a high-energy laser weapon system demonstration Dec. 14 while sailing in the Gulf of Aden, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs said Dec. 15.

During the demonstration, the Solid-State Laser – Technology Maturation Laser Weapons System Demonstrator Mark 2 MOD 0 aboard Portland successfully engaged a static surface training

target. Portland previously tested the LWSD in May 2020 when it successfully disabled a small unmanned aerial system while operating in the Pacific Ocean.

The Office of Naval Research selected Portland to host the laser weapon technology in 2018. The LWSD is considered a next-generation follow-on to the Laser Weapon System that afloat forward staging base USS Ponce (AFSB(I)-15) tested for three years while operating in the Middle East.

Portland is part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group that includes amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2), dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) and embarked Marines from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. The units departed San Diego in August and began operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet region in September.

The region’s geography, climate, and strategic importance offer a unique environment for technology innovation. U.S. 5th Fleet’s area of operations includes the world’s largest standing maritime partnership, Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and parts of the Indian Ocean.

USCGC Vigilant Offloads 17,000 Pounds of Illegal Narcotics in Port Everglades

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-624) crewmembers pose with approximately 17,000 pounds of illegal narcotics at Port Everglades, Florida, Dec. 15. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan Estrada*

PORT EVERGLADES, Fla. – The USCGC Vigilant crew (WMEC 617) offloaded illegal narcotics worth an estimated $236 million on Wednesday in Port Everglades before returning to homeport in Port Canaveral, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The crew of the 67-year-old Vigilant offloaded more than 17,000 pounds of cocaine and marijuana following a 45-day patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. An embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment augmented the ship's crew, leveraging the service's unique capabilities and authorities to perform law enforcement operations in international waters.

The drugs, which include nearly 12,000 pounds of cocaine and more than 5,000 pounds of marijuana, were seized during five interdictions conducted by crews of the Vigilant, USCGC Tampa

(WMEC 902), and the Royal Canadian Navy's HMCS Harry Dewolf (AOPV 430) in international waters off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America.

Numerous U.S. and partner nation agencies cooperate to combat transnational organized crime.

"The successful interdiction of over 17,000 pounds of illegal narcotics and the apprehension of 17 suspected traffickers are the result of tremendous teamwork," said Cmdr. Jay Guyer, commanding officer of the Vigilant. "We are thankful for coordinated efforts across the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of Defense, Customs and Border Protection, as well as our international partners from Canada and throughout Central and South America."

Vigilant, a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter, patrols the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean, performing counter-drug operations, migrant interdiction operations, search and rescue and fisheries enforcement.

Austal Finalizes Deal for San Diego Waterfront Ship Repair Facility

The Independence-variant littoral combat ships USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10), bottom, and USS Montgomery (LCS 8) operate in the South China Sea. Shipbuilder Austal USA has finalized a deal to establish a repair facility in the Port of San Diego, including for littoral combat ships. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chris Roys*

SAN DIEGO — Austal USA has finalized a deal to establish a repair facility in the Port of San Diego, the company said Dec. 15.

The deal includes a long-term lease of a waterfront site in National City adjacent to Naval Base San Diego. Austal USA's 15-acre site will focus on ship repair for U.S. Navy, Military Sealift Command and U.S. Coast Guard ships. The site will be centered on a newly built dry dock designed to efficiently dock small surface combatants and similar sized ships.

"This agreement marks a major milestone in the continued growth of Austal USA's services business. When the dry dock is delivered, we will be able to provide the Navy a highly

capable full-service repair facility located in the homeport of San Diego," Austal USA President Rusty Murdaugh said. "We know how valuable this additional repair facility is to our customers, the Navy, Coast Guard, and Military Sealift Command, and we are ready to meet the growing demand. We are also looking forward to working closely with the National City community as we expand our presence in the area."

Austal USA will establish a full-service ship repair capability providing maintenance and modernization for small surface combatants, unmanned and autonomous vessels, and other ships. The site will include a dry dock optimized to execute availabilities on littoral combat ships and other small surface combatants. Services will include technical and material support, topside work, and drydocking availabilities. The new facility will enable more availabilities to be completed in their home port of San Diego reducing the strain on the fleet and Sailors.

This lease agreement follows a string of maintenance contract awards for Austal USA. In August, the Navy awarded Austal SEC East and West contracts positioning the company to service all Littoral Combat Ships. In November, Austal received a contract to provide services and support for LCS deployed to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. These contracts are the result of the company's significant investment in and continued focus on growing its service business and centers in Mobile, San Diego and Singapore.

Fairbanks Morse Defense

Acquires Fluid Filtration Specialists LLC

BELOIT, Wis. – Fairbanks Morse Defense, a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, has acquired Fluid Filtration Specialists LLC, a leader in flushing and filtration services for marine vessels and other facilities that operate large, highly sophisticated engines and systems.

The acquisition of FFS further expands FMD's capabilities and service solutions for shipyard, defense, and commercial marine customers, including the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Canadian Coast Guard.

"Fluid Filtration Specialists has a stellar reputation for doing quality work correctly and on time, which makes it a natural fit for our turnkey service offerings," said George Whittier, CEO of FMD. "Our growing shipbuilding solutions are operating on the military's most advanced naval vessels and adding services like those provided by FFS helps us serve as a single, proven partner who knows those ships from stem to stern. This allows us to respond faster with just the right parts, services, and maintenance solutions."

Founded by engineering experts, FFS focuses on proven fluid separation and cleaning systems that were specifically designed to address the maintenance and reliability concerns of heavy equipment used in critical operational systems, often under challenging conditions.

"Quality care of high-performance mechanical systems creates opportunities to lower costs, reduce downtime, and prolong the reliability and lifespan of valuable assets," said Shane Sims, owner of FFS. "Becoming part of Fairbanks Morse Defense enables us to leverage its robust service center network to expand our reach among defense customers that so many

communities depend on.”

Over the past year, FMD has expanded its capabilities, inventory, and geographic presence with several key acquisitions to become a single-source provider of equipment and services to the marine defense industry. In 2021, FMD acquired Welin Lambie, a military and commercial davit manufacturer; Hunt Valve, a specialty naval valve manufacturer; and in 2020, FMD acquired Ward Leonard, a motor and control solutions provider. FMD also acquired diesel engine repair and rebuilding service provider BRECO International in November 2020.

Coast Guard, Partners Stop 3 Human Smuggling Attempts, Detain 100 People

An abandoned vessel on Juno Beach, Florida, Dec. 12. U.S. Border Patrol officers apprehended 26 people following a maritime smuggling event. *U.S. BORDER PATROL*

MIAMI – Coast Guard, U.S Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations and U.S. Border Patrol officers stopped three human smuggling attempts and detained 100 people between Dec. 12 and Dec. 14, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Coast Guard and CBP AMO officers detained 43 people at sea, and one suspected smuggler was transferred to Homeland Security Investigation officers for further investigation, Sunday, off the coast of Jupiter, Florida. Additionally, 26 people were apprehended by Border Patrol officers after a

maritime smuggling event landed in the vicinity of Ocean Blvd.

Coast Guard and CBP AMO officers detained 28 people of various nationalities at sea, and the case is under investigation by Homeland Security Investigation officers, Dec. 14, off Pompano's coast.

Additionally, two landings happened off Pompano Beach, Dec. 12 and Dec. 14, and approximately 26 people were not apprehended.

"Human smuggling is dangerous and illegal," said Rear Adm. Brendan McPherson, commander of Coast Guard 7th District and director of Homeland Security Task Force-Southeast. "Smugglers exploit vulnerable people for profit with no regard for their safety. We work hard, along with our dedicated local law enforcement and fellow DHS partners, to protect all lives on and offshore."

"Air and Marine Operations has the duty to patrol the waters around the Florida Straits, and along with our partners, we work every day to defeat the efforts of smugglers who have little regard for the human suffering they cause," said Gerald Burgess, spokesman for Air and Marine Operations, Southeast Region. "Together with DHS partners, we work to keep the waters safe and secure."

Those intercepted at sea are transferred or repatriated to their country of origin.

Homeland Security Task Force-Southeast is a standing task force that provides the organizational framework to detect a mass migration event or other contingency operation, facilitate the assignment of roles to participating agencies, and establishes processes for intra-departmental and inter-departmental collaboration. Partners within HSTF-SE routinely conduct a broad range of readiness activities, including periodic surge operations and exercises.