Defence Ministry Unveils Plan for Maiden Deployment of Queen Elizabeth Carrier

Royal navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08) transits the Atlantic Ocean in 2019. *HNLMS De Ruyter*

LONDON – The U.K. Ministry of Defence (MoD) has made public details of the first deployment for its new aircraft carrier, scheduled to begin next month, according to an April 27 MoD announcement.

The carrier strike group, led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, will sail for the Indo-Pacific in May in the largest concentration of British air and maritime power in years, the ministry said on Monday.

The strike group will include the Daring-class destroyers, Defender and Diamond; Norfolk-class frigates, Kent and Richmond; an Astute-class attack submarine; and the support ships Fort Victoria and Tidespring.

In addition, the Dutch frigate Evertsen and U.S. destroyer The Sullivans will accompany the carrier group.

For her maiden deployment, the Queen Elizabeth will carry eight Royal Air Force F-35B Lightning II fighters and a squadron of 10 U.S. Marine Corps F-35Bs; four AW159 Wildcat maritime attack helicopters; seven Merlin Mk 2 anti-submarine; and three Merlin Mk 4 commando helicopters.

A company of Royal Marine Commandos will also participate in the mission.

The carrier strike group is scheduled to visit more than 40 countries and conduct more than 70 engagements, including dual carrier operations with French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in the Mediterranean, the defense ministry said.

Engagements are scheduled with India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea. The strike group will also take part in Exercise Bersama Lima to mark the 50th anniversary of the five-powers agreement with Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

Thales Selected by Lockheed Martin to deliver ALFS to the U.S., Indian, Greek and Danish Navies

Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class Christian Guillen, from Dallas, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, performs maintenance on an airborne low frequency sonar, April 15, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Robert Stamer*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Thales has signed a contract with Lockheed Martin as a tier-one supplier for the delivery of up to 55 airborne anti-submarine warfare sonars, Thales said in an April 27 release. The ALFS (Airborne Low-Frequency Sonar) dipping sonars will be installed on the MH-60R platform for the U.S. Navy and three additional navies. Delivery of the first 42 systems will occur over the next five years with the delivery of 13 optional systems to occur in year six.

Thales has delivered more than 300 ALFS sonars to the U.S. Navy since the early 2000s and this new contract with Lockheed Martin will continue to support the Navy's readiness strategy. The navies of India, Denmark and Greece will receive their first deliveries of the ALFS sonar system through direct U.S. Foreign Military Sales of the MH-60R platform.

To maintain control over their maritime space and protect security interests around the world, naval forces need reliable, high-performing systems to operate with optimum effect on missions including anti-submarine warfare, maritime search and rescue, defense of maritime approaches and fleet protection for naval forces on deployment.

Offering unparalleled protection to maritime convoys, the ALFS anti-submarine warfare system is capable of detecting, classifying, prosecuting, harassing or attacking submarines, making Thales the benchmark for the world's major navies. In addition to the U.S. Navy, the other navies that have chosen Thales dipping sonar solutions include the navies of Australia, France, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, South Korea, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

As a low-frequency active sonar, ALFS is designed for the initial detection and tracking of opposing submarines. It offers a long detection range with a wide coverage rate and low false alarm level, both in deep and coastal waters. It can be used autonomously to clear a particular area or as a complementary anti-submarine warfare asset to sonars on-board surface vessels for target location and attack.

"Earning the trust of the U.S. Navy, its allies and partners around the globe is a source of pride for our team," said Alexis Morel, vice president for Underwater systems, Thales. "This contract enhances our position as a strategic supplier to Lockheed Martin and further consolidates the Group's world leadership position in anti-submarine warfare systems. We will continue to improve the performance and competitiveness of our airborne sonars to meet the new anti-submarine warfare operational challenges of our customers."

IRGCN Interaction with U.S. Naval Vessels in the North Arabian Gulf

Three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) fast inshore attack craft (FIAC) approach the U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranof (WPB 1318) and patrol coastal ship USS Firebolt (PC 10), while the U.S. vessels were conducting routine maritime security patrols in the international waters of the North Arabian Gulf, April 26. Firebolt is assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's Task Force (TF) 55 and Baranof is assigned to Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), the largest U.S. Coast Guard unit outside the United States, and operates under TF 55. *U.S. NAVY*

BAHRAIN – At approximately 8 p.m. on April 26, three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) fast inshore attack craft (FIAC) failed to exercise due regard for the safety of other vessels as required under international law as

they came into close proximity to U.S. naval vessels in international waters of the north Arabian Gulf, the U.S. 5th Fleet said in an April 27 release.

The IRGCN armed speed boats rapidly approached U.S. Navy patrol coastal ship USS Firebolt (PC 10) and U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff (WPB 1318) to an unnecessarily close range with unknown intent, including a closest point of approach (CPA) of 68 yards to both U.S. ships.

Firebolt and Baranoff were conducting routine maritime security operations in international waters during the time of the incident.

The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the IRGCN vessels continued their close-range maneuvers. The crew of Firebolt then fired warning shots, and the IRGCN vessels moved away to a safe distance from the U.S. vessels.

Throughout the interaction, U.S. forces proactively communicated with the IRGCN vessels and executed pre-planned responses to reduce the risk of miscalculation, avoid a collision, and to de-escalate the situation.

The IRGCN’s actions increased the risk of miscalculation and/or collision, were not in accordance with the internationally recognized Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) “rules of the road” or internationally recognized maritime customs. In addition, the IRGCN actions were not in accordance with the obligation under international law to act with due regard for the safety of other vessels in the area.

U.S. naval forces continue to remain vigilant and are trained to act in a professional manner, while commanding officers retain the inherent right to act in self-defense.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Enters Black Sea

Seaman Cheyenne Solis Headlam looks out from the bridge wing of USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) while the Turkish coast guard escorts Hamilton in the Mediterranean Sea, April 27, 2021. U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton is on a routine deployment in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national interests and security in Europe and Africa. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Sydney Phoenix*

BLACK SEA — The Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) transited into the Black Sea to support NATO Allies and partners, April 27, 2021, the U.S. U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs said in an April 27 release.

Hamilton is the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the

Black Sea since 2008. The last U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea, USCGC Dallas (WHEC 716), sailed to the Black Sea twice, in 2008 and 1995.

The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey (CG 61) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) conducted Black Sea operations on a routine patrol to maintain maritime security alongside other NATO Allies and partners in March 2021.

This patrol comes after Hamilton conducted logistics visits to Naples, Italy, and Rota, Spain. The U.S. Coast Guard is conducting a routine deployment in U.S. 6th Fleet, working alongside allies, building maritime domain awareness and sharing best practices with partner nation navies and coast guards.

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard operate forward, from the littoral to the open ocean, ensuring stability and open sea lanes across all maritime domains. U.S 6th Fleet routinely conducts operations in the Black Sea.

Hamilton is the fourth national security cutter and is the fifth named for the father of the U.S. Coast Guard — Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the Treasury and advocate for creating the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

The U.S. Coast Guard remains operational during COVID-19, following all COVID-19 safety precautions and regulations.

Coast Guard Cutter Delivers

Emergency Supplies to Palau following Typhoon Surigae

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) deliver emergency supplies to the island of Kayangel, Palau, following Typhoon Surigae, April 24, 2021.The supplies included water and food for the people of Kayangel. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo courtesy of Petty Officer 3rd Class Philip Groff*

SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) delivered emergency supplies including water and food to the island of Kayangel, April 24, the Coast Guard 14th District said in an April 26 release.

The mission was in response to a national emergency declared by President Surangel Whipps Jr. of Palau after Typhoon Surigae devastated the region last week.

"Today, our crew had a unique opportunity to conduct one of the most satisfying missions the United States Coast Guard is

known for, humanitarian aid," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Johnson, a coxswain aboard the Myrtle Hazard. "We were extremely excited to be able to offer help, which for a small island such as Kayangel makes a major impact. I am proud I was able to be a part of it."

Last week the slow-moving typhoon made landfall in Palau bringing significant rainfall and heavy winds. The storm caused flooding and resulted in damage to homes and properties throughout the islands.

On April 18, the president of Palau declared a national emergency and made an official request to the United States embassy for assistance. Capt. Christopher Chase, commander, Coast Guard Sector Guam and Ambassador John Hennessey-Niland, U.S. Embassy Koror, spoke by phone and determined what supplies were needed and the best method to deliver them.

At the time, the Myrtle Hazard's crew was conducting an illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries patrol north of Guam and was recalled back to homeport for the humanitarian mission.

On Guam, supplies were being donated and collected by a number of different organizations including the Chief Petty Officers Association Marianas Chapter, the U.S Naval Base Chapel, the Orotte Commissary, the Ngaraad Club of Guam, the Kayangel Club of Guam and the Guam Paluan community.

The cutter then departed Guam for the 800 nautical mile transit to Palau with the supplies.

Upon arriving in Palau the crew worked closely with the government and the U.S. embassy to coordinate a safe, contactless transfer of the supplies to Kayangel and to ensure the safety of both the people of Palau and the cutters crew while conserving the nation's vital medical supplies.

"It's a rewarding mission to deliver aid whenever required,"

said Lt. Tony Seleznick, the Myrtle Hazard's commanding officer. "This operation exemplified the great partnership between the U.S. and the Republic of Palau. The crew of Myrtle Hazard performed excellently and highlighted why the U.S. Coast Guard is the world's best Coast Guard."

USSOCOM Awards AeroVironment $26 Million for Switchblade 600 Tactical Missile Systems

An artist's illustration of the Switchblade 600. *AEROVIRONMENT*

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — AeroVironment Inc. has been awarded a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract on March 31, 2021, by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) for $26 million

with $7 million funded upon receipt. The contract includes delivery and integration of Switchblade 600 tactical missile systems into specialized maritime platforms, scheduled to be completed by January 2023.

“Our team worked closely with our customers to develop Switchblade 600, a loitering missile system that addresses the increasingly complex needs and mission requirements of counterinsurgency operations and those against peer and near-peer adversaries,” said Brett Hush, AeroVironment vice president and product line general manager for tactical missile systems. “Integrating Switchblade 600 into combat platforms, such as the USSOCOM’s specialized maritime vessels, enhances force overmatch, minimizes warfighter exposure to enemy direct and indirect fires and accelerates the maturation of this innovative solution.”

The AeroVironment Switchblade 600 is an all-in-one, man-portable system equipped with a high-performance electro-optical/infrared gimbaled sensor suite, precision flight control and more than 40 minutes of flight time to deliver unprecedented tactical reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition (RSTA). Its anti-armor warhead enables engagement and prosecution of hardened static and moving light armored vehicles from multiple angles – without external ISR or fires assets – for precise, localized effects and minimal collateral damage.

VTG Awarded $116M NIWC-PAC Contract for C4ISR

Engineering and Production

The Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific tests there autonomy software system on an Amphibious Assault Vehicle provided by the Amphibious Vehicle Testing Branch at the Del Mar Boat Basin on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Sept. 23, 2019. *U.S. MARINE CORPS Lance Cpl. Andrew Cortez*

CHANTILLY, Va. – VTG, a provider of force modernization and digital transformation solutions, has won a prime contract from the Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific (NIWC-PAC) to provide C4ISR engineering and production services to its Network Integration Engineering Facility, the company said in an April 26 release.

The indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity NIEF Production Services contract has a potential value of $116 million over a five-year performance period.

“For more than 50 years, VTG has provided the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command and NIWC-PAC with C4ISR

installation and integration support both afloat and ashore," said John Hassoun, VTG president and chief executive officer. "We're proud of that longstanding partnership and excited about this new opportunity to leverage our growing C4ISR production capabilities in support of the NIEF's mission."

The NIWC-PAC NIEF, located at NAVWAR headquarters in San Diego, California, specializes in the rapid design and integration of commercial and government off-the-shelf products for military applications. It also provides environmental qualification testing services for those products and limited- and full-rate production. The facility was modernized in 2019 to better support the design and delivery of advanced information warfare capabilities to the fleet.

VTG will provide the NIEF with procurement, fabrication, and integration of C4ISR end items, including production units, ancillary kits, sub-systems, assemblies, sub-assemblies, modules, and spares. These end items include a full spectrum of C4ISR systems for surface ships, submarines, and shore-based applications.

MARAD Awards $19.6 Million Toward U.S. Shipyard Economic Competitiveness

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) has announced $19.6 million in grant awards to 31 small shipyards in 15 states through the Small Shipyard Grant Program. The funds will help awardees modernize, increase productivity, and expand local employment

opportunities while competing in the global marketplace. Since 2008, MARAD's Small Shipyard Grant Program has awarded $262.5 million to nearly 300 shipyards in 32 states and territories throughout the U.S.

"Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy, and small shipyards play a critical role in America's maritime industry," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. "These grants go directly to small shipyards across the country and will help protect and create local jobs, strengthen America's maritime industry, and bolster our economic security."

Small shipyards are essential parts of our maritime industrial base and employ thousands of Americans. They strengthen communities along and near our nation's ports and waterways. Many small shipyards are family-run businesses – and they are all enterprises in which small investments can make big differences. MARAD's Small Shipyard Grant Program supports economic competitiveness through grants that can be used to purchase equipment or train employees. In addition, the purchase of American-made manufacturing equipment made possible by Small Shipyard grants supports a wide range of jobs throughout our Nation's manufacturing base.

"These grants will help small businesses do what they do best: build essential infrastructure while creating long-term jobs for American workers," said Lucinda Lessley, Acting Maritime Administrator. "Better equipment means increased productivity and more ships moving through our small shipyards – and more ships mean more local jobs."

Department of the Navy awards Navy Enterprise Resource Planning Technical Support Services Task Order

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) awarded the Navy Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Technical Support Services (NETSS) task order Friday on behalf of the Program Executive Office for Manpower, Logistics and Business Solutions' (PEO MLB) Navy Enterprise Business Solutions (Navy EBS) program management office, the PEO MLB said in an April 24 release.

NETSS is the lead system integrator contract for Navy ERP, the Department of the Navy's (DON) financial system of record, managing nearly 56% of the Navy's total obligation authority. To date, Navy ERP has been deployed to 72,000 users across six Navy systems commands.

A SeaPort-NxG Multiple Award Contract (MAC) task order, NETSS was awarded to International Business Machines (IBM) headquartered in Armonk, New York. The task order period of performance is a 12-month base and four 12-month options, as well as a single option to extend the term of the task order for six months. The total task order value is approximately $850 million.

"The award of NETSS is a major milestone in the continued maturation of Navy ERP's capabilities," said Edward Quick, program manager for Navy EBS. "The services provided by the NETSS task order will enable the continued migration of new commands to Navy ERP, a move that will facilitate the Navy's ability to conduct a clean financial audit."

In the last year, Navy EBS has consolidated and migrated seven

DON commands and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy with a budget authority of $8 billion from their legacy financial systems to Navy ERP. This effort also included migrating and validating more than 4 billion transactions to Navy ERP, providing a more complete and audit-ready financial management system.

“The recent strides the Navy has made in migrating commands to Navy ERP and the award of NETSS is a testament to the strong partnership and collaboration between PEO MLB and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management and Comptroller [ASN(FM&C)],” said Les Hubbard, program executive officer for MLB. “Together, we are enabling the business of the Navy.”

The NETSS task order includes Information Technology (IT), Information Management (IM), large scale Systems Integration (SI) and Information Systems (IS) mission support activities. The NETSS vendor will provide services to upgrade and support Navy ERP’s capabilities including business intelligence, logistics, development, deployment and sustainment. NETSS services include data governance and analysis, business process re-engineering and management, software design and developing, and business system integration. Additionally, NETSS include process management, solution delivery and data services, which support current and future Department of Defense and DON requirements in the areas of enterprise information management services, solution engineering services, business process management services, analytics and decision support services and knowledge transfer.

The NETSS Fair Opportunity Proposal Request (FOPR) solicitation was released to all SeaPort-NxG MAC holders on Dec. 23, 2020 and proposals were due on Jan. 27, 2021.

Prior to the award of NETSS, Navy ERP’s system integrator support was provided by multiple companies via the Process Improvement, Reengineering, Management and Data Support

Services (PIRMDS2) Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) MAC issued in 2016 to multiple contractors by Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) Fleet Logistics Center Norfolk.

Gerald R. Ford Successfully Completes Combat Systems Ship's Qualification Trials

An evolved sea sparrow missile (ESSM) launches from one of USS Gerald R. Ford’s (CVN 78) weapons sponsons during combat

systems ship qualification trials (CSSQT), April 16, 2021. CSSQT is a Naval Sea Systems Command requirement to verify that ship personnel can operate and maintain their combat systems in a safe and effective manner. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean conducting its final independent steaming event of post-delivery tests and trials. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin*
ATLANTIC OCEAN – Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) successfully completed Combat Systems Ship's Qualification Trials (CSSQT) April 17, representing a major milestone in validating the ship's capability to defend itself and the crew, the ship's public affairs officer said in an April 24 release.

The trials, which commenced in February, consisted of five phases. The completion of the final phase, 2C, and CSSQT overall, is the culmination of years of planning, training, ingenuity and thousands of working hours for the ship's current and previous crews.

"I could not be more proud of our Sailors and their historic accomplishment," said Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, Ford's commanding officer. "CSSQT was a live-fire, hands-on opportunity to prove the self-defense capability of this fine warship. We always intend to use our embarked air wing to influence our adversaries at great ranges from the ship, but if they're able to get a shot at us, this event has shown our crew the formidable nature of our organic weapons."

According to ship's CSSQT project officer, Larry Daugherty, phase 2C was the "prove it" phase for the ship, which had already completed multiple detect-to-engage scenarios with live aircraft. In 2C, Ford faced off against rocket propelled drones capable of speeds in excess of 600 miles per hour; towed drone units (TDUs) that simulate rockets; and remote controlled, high-speed maneuvering surface targets (HSMST).

The crew countered, relying on their skills and training to operate Ford's advanced defense systems. They used the rolling

airframe missile (RAM) launchers, firing off RIM-116 missiles; the NATO launchers to fire the evolved sea sparrow missiles (ESSM); and the Mk-15 Phalanx Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) to fire armor-piercing tungsten bullets at 4,500 rounds per minute.

“The crew crushed it, firing off four missiles [two RIM-116 and two ESSM], and all of them were conducted with precision control by combat direction center (CDC) watch teams, they executed perfectly,” said Daugherty. “All command and control decisions were made correctly, and the [systems] were engaged when they were supposed to be engaged and everything went out on time.”

The ship’s defense missiles engaged the drones and CIWS took out the TDUs and HSMSTs. All three TDUs were destroyed, and two of those TDUs were ripped to shreds, according to Daugherty. All three HSMSTs were destroyed as well.

“Those Sailors not only took out the first two HSMSTs, they punched holes in them, set them on fire, and they both sank,” said Daugherty. “On the third one, the CIWS operator was so good that he actually hit the target further out than the weapon system’s maximum effective range and put it DIW [dead in the water].”

As the first crew to fire Ford’s missiles and complete this mission, it is a huge accomplishment, according to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Todd Williamson, Ford’s fire control officer, and it began with the on-load of the missiles.

“Getting missiles transported and loaded onto a ship is a big movement that requires national coordination between multiple entities,” said Williamson. “The ship’s fire controlmen and Weapons Department were the backbone of the handling evolution, while Ford’s Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department provided material handling equipment readiness support. Our ISEA [In-Service Engineering Agents] were also

on-hand to provide oversight.”

The first few days of the nearly week-long exercises for 2C were some of the most challenging, according to Williamson. “For Weapons Department and Combat Systems Department, it was two 18-hour back-to-back days just to get set-up and complete telemetry checks,” he said.

The telemetry checks provide the capability to record the flight performance characteristics and fusing of RAM and ESSM missiles to ensure they are capable of hitting their intended targets, according to Daugherty.

There were other system checks, system and equipment tuning, ordnance uploads, preventative maintenance checks and casualty repairs, which collectively made for an extremely complex series of exercises. According to Fire Controlman 2nd Class Douglas Huyge, who has been aboard Ford for two years, his team was up for the challenge.

“I am 100% impressed with the way the division worked together to achieve this goal,” said Huyge. “People who are in leadership positions dream of dream-teams like this, we worked hard to get here and we executed the mission.”

CSSQT is the culminating combat systems test of Ford’s 18-month post-delivery test and trials (PDT&T) phase of operations. Following PDT&T this month, Ford will commence preparations for Full Ship Shock Trials, scheduled to occur during the summer, to validate the ability of new construction ships to carry out assigned missions and evaluate operational survivability after exposure to an underwater shock.

“[CSSQT] was probably the single-handed greatest feeling I’ve felt on this ship so far,” said Huyge, describing how he felt watching the live-fire evolution in CDC, after many years of hard work. “I would say what I felt was fulfillment. It was a high level of fulfillment.”

USS Gerald R. Ford is a first-in-class aircraft carrier, and the first new aircraft carrier designed in more than 40 years. The ship is underway for Independent Steaming Event 18 (ISE 18), as part of her PDT&T phase of operations.