GA-ASI Plans to Demonstrate Maritime Capability in the United Kingdom

General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.’s SkyGuardian remotely piloted aircraft. GA-ASI

SAN DIEGO — General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI) plans to take a company-owned SkyGuardian remotely piloted aircraft to the United Kingdom later this year to undertake a series of operational capability demonstrations for NATO allies, including The Netherlands, the company said in a Feb. 3 release. The U.K.’s Protector program is a derivative of SkyGuardian with a range of U.K. modifications and the Royal Air Force (RAF) is supporting this visit.

The GA-ASI aircraft will be configured with maritime capability, including a multi-mode maritime surface-search radar with Inverse Synthetic Aperture Radar imaging mode, an

Automatic Identification System receiver, and a High-Definition, Full-Motion Video sensor equipped with optical and infrared cameras. This will build on previous GA-ASI demonstrations showcasing the unmanned advantage, which include the transatlantic flight of SkyGuardian in 2018, maritime demonstrations in Greece in 2019 and last year's validation flights in Japan.

"GA-ASI will work closely with multiple European allies to demonstrate the capabilities of MQ-9B, including in the maritime environment, and how MQ-9B can complement and team within a networked environment with other national assets," said Tommy Dunehew, vice president of International Strategic Development for GA-ASI.

The series of civilian and military capability events is expected to kick off in July at the Royal Air Force's Waddington Air Base and will culminate with the MQ-9B's participation in the U.K.-led Joint Warrior exercise that will showcase how maritime capabilities can be integrated with other air, surface and land platforms. SkyGuardian flights will further develop GA-ASI's revolutionary Detect and Avoid capability, which will enable Protector to fly in unsegregated UK airspace. It will also assist RAF Waddington, the future home of the RAF Protector fleet, to best prepare to integrate the new aircraft into its daily operations.

MQ-9B represents the next generation of remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) system having demonstrated airborne endurance of more than 40 hours, automatic takeoffs and landings under SATCOM-only control and the detect and avoid system. Its development is the result of a company-funded effort to deliver an RPA that can meet the stringent airworthiness certification requirements of various military and civil authorities.

MQ-9B has garnered significant interest from customers throughout the world. The U.K. Ministry of Defence selected

MQ-9B SkyGuardian for its Protector program, and in 2020 signed the production contract for deliveries to the Royal Air Force. SkyGuardian was selected by the Australian Defence Force under Project Air 7003, and the Belgian Ministry of Defense signed a contract for SkyGuardian.

Northrop Grumman, Ultra Demonstrate ASW Using Unmanned Helicopter

Northrop Grumman collaborates with Ultra to demonstrate unmanned anti-submarine warfare capability. Northrop Grumman SAN DIEGO – Northrop Grumman Corp. and U.K.-based Ultra equipped a modified, manned Bell 407 (acting as an MQ-8C Fire Scout surrogate) platform with Ultra sonobuoys, receiver and processor to complete an unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability demonstration, Northrop

Grumman said in a Feb. 2 release.

This successful demonstration of the UAS ASW mission on Oct. 29 was the first time a vertical takeoff surrogate unmanned aerial system had been used to conduct a large area multi-static acoustic search. The mission payload and effects were controlled from the ground with the resultant ASW picture disseminated to locations across the globe.

“Adding an ASW capability to Fire Scout’s existing multi-mission capabilities would further enhance this highly-versatile platform,” said Dan Redman, Fire Scout maritime mission expansion lead, Northrop Grumman. “This ASW capability would offer commanders flexibility to employ not only UAS systems in this particular ASW role, but also utilize the increased availability of crewed aircraft more incisively against an expanded mission set. This would increase the total available effect of the manned/unmanned teamed force mix.”

By jointly developing and demonstrating UAS ASW capabilities, initially on an MQ-8C Fire Scout manned surrogate as part of an industry-led initiative, the two companies are combining their world-leading expertise and experience with the aim of bringing unique ASW solutions to global customers. While the U.S. Navy has not yet identified a clear requirement for UAS ASW capability, it has shown interest in the development and continues to support and monitor progress.

“Operating prototype hardware in a high-pressure real-world environment can be challenging,” said Thomas Link, president of Ultra Maritime. “Our partnership will bring an innovative and leading ASW capability into operation, combining both manned and unmanned ASW systems that will help defend our warfighters and provide increased capability to our forces.”

The MQ-8C Fire Scout can fly missions in excess of 12 hours, providing commanders an unrivaled level of layered multi-source/sensor intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and

command and control/comms relay capabilities over land and sea. When operating in a manned-unmanned teaming concept, Fire Scout enables commanders to employ manned assets in a more focused manner, allowing them to exploit hybrid manned/unmanned teaming opportunities.

Ultra’s applications engineers are trusted partners in the design, development and production of the key elements of mission critical, intelligent and highly regulated systems.

U.S., Russia Sign Joint Contingency Plan for Pollution Response in the Bering and Chukchi Seas

The Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley's small boat transfers their boarding team onto the fishing vessel Northwestern to conduct a safety inspection in the Bering Sea in this 2018 photo. U.S. Coast Guard / Ens. Douglas Zimmerman

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard and the Russian Federation's Marine Rescue Service recently signed the 2020 Joint Contingency Plan of the United States of America & the Russian Federation in Combating Pollution on the Bering & Chukchi Seas, the Coast Guard 17th District said in a Feb. 2 release.

On Feb. 1, 2021, Acting Director Andrey Khaustov of the Russian Federation's Marine Rescue Service (MRS) and the U.S. Coast Guard's deputy commandant for operations, Vice Adm. Scott Buschman, signed the 2020 update to the Joint Contingency Plan (JCP), a bilateral agreement focused on preparing for and responding to transboundary maritime pollution incidents.

The updated JCP promotes a coordinated system for planning, preparing and responding to pollutant substance incidents in

the waters between the U.S. and Russia. The U.S. and Russian Federation have shared a cooperative bilateral agreement on transboundary marine pollution preparedness and response in this area since 1989. The newest JCP revision requires joint planning and transboundary exercise efforts to be coordinated by a Joint Planning Group led by Coast Guard District 17, and is guided by a non-binding two-year work plan. In addition, the updated JCP creates the new International Coordinating Officer role to help facilitate the critical sharing of information during coordinated response efforts.

“This is an important agreement between the U.S and the Russian Federation that ensures coordination between respective authorities and actively promotes the protection of our shared interests in these environmentally and culturally significant trans-boundary waters,” Buschman said. “We look forward to continuing our necessary and productive relationship with the Marine Rescue Service and the opportunity to conduct joint training and exercises in the near future in order to ensure the protection of our nations’ critical natural resources.”

The shared maritime boundary between the U.S. and Russia in the Bering and Chukchi seas has notoriously poor weather conditions and limited resources to respond to pollution incidents. This plan primarily addresses international collaboration matters and as such is meant to augment each country’s national response system as well as state, regional, and local plans. In the United States, the operational aspects of the plan fall under the responsibility of the U.S. Coast Guard’s 17th District Commander and Sector Anchorage.

HII Awarded $175M U.S. Navy CVN Support Contract

The USS Enterprise, left, passes the USS George H.W. Bush in this 2011 photo. Huntington Ingalls Industries' Technical Solutions division has been awarded a contract for maintenance, training and planning support of U.S. Navy carriers. U.S. Navy

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Technical Solutions division was awarded a contract last week to provide maintenance, training and planning support for U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, the company said in a Feb. 1 release. The indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract includes a five-year ordering term, with a total potential value of $175 million.

"We are very pleased the U.S. Navy has entrusted us to support the readiness of one of our nation's most important power

projection platforms," said Garry Schwartz, president of Technical Solutions' Defense and Federal Solutions business group. "For nearly four decades, we've partnered with the Navy on this critical program, and we look forward to continuing to advance our nation's fleet sustainment for years to come."

HII will provide engineering services, maintenance and operator training as well as technical and repair services in support of maintenance and planning for the overhaul, modernization and repair of shipboard elevators, cargo-handling equipment and associated systems installed within U.S. Navy aircraft carriers.

The work, contracted by Naval Sea Systems Command, will be performed on board U.S. Navy aircraft carriers in Norfolk, Virginia; San Diego, California; Bremerton and Everett, Washington; Japan, and other fleet concentration areas to be determined.

Davie Polar Icebreaker Program Confirms GE as Strategic Partner

CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent, one of Canada's aging polar icebreakers, shown here transiting Halifax Harbor. Wikipedia / Verne Equinox

LEVIS, QUEBEC – Davie, Canada's premier builder of polar and ice-capable ships, welcomed GE as a strategic partner in its polar icebreaker program, the flagship of Canada's National Icebreaker Centre, Davie said in a Feb. 2 release.

Launched in August 2020, the NIC is a center of excellence for polar technologies and Arctic expertise. It reflects Davie's role as Canada's icebreaking partner and builder of the new icebreaker fleet, under the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

This will create thousands of good jobs, a vibrant world-class maritime cluster in Québec and drive exports of Canadian innovation.

Canada’s current polar icebreakers are very old. CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent is deep into its sixth decade and CCGS Terry Fox is fast approaching 40 years in service. A new polar class will enable Canada to maintain a continuous Arctic presence benefiting all Canadians, including the northern communities, enabling ice-choked trade, supporting Arctic sovereignty and protecting the polar environment.

GE’s Power Conversion business offer a full spectrum of best-in-class integrated electrical propulsion and power systems, including its Seajet podded propulsion units. The ice-class range of Seajet – a technology jointly developed with AETC Sapphire – is available for Polar Class notation, with a power range of 7.5 MW to 15 MW. In the Seajet system the electric motor is housed in the hull mounted pod and directly connected to the propeller, freeing up cargo and operational space in the ship. Maneuverability and efficiency are greatly improved, and total fuel consumption and exhaust emissions are reduced. Customizable for different ship types, with simplified installation, Seajet pods can enhance performance in an array of commercial, offshore marine, and ice breaking ships.

Davie is Canada’s only mega-yard with 50% of total capacity, able to build up to eight large, complex ships simultaneously. The 150-meter polar will be easily accommodated in Davie’s 351-meter Champlain Dry Dock. An integrated build schedule would ensure polar would complement other Davie programs such as the six program icebreakers it is set to build under the NSS. In fact, it would facilitate a steep learning curve and economies of scale to significantly benefit both programs by mitigating cost, schedule and performance risks.

Moreover, a recent analysis conducted for Davie by Deloitte, drawing on ISED and StatCan numbers, concluded that building

polar icebreakers at Davie will generate up to 2,500 well-paid jobs, engage over 1,300 suppliers (with 900 plus in Québec) and contribute up to $2.5 billion to the Canadian economy.

“We welcome GE to our polar program,” said James Davies, president and CEO of Davie Shipbuilding. “Their leading-edge propulsion system combined with decades of icebreaker experience and electric and power system capabilities are unsurpassed. Their inclusion also greatly strengthens Canada’s National Icebreaker Centre. Together, we can ensure the polar is stimulating the post-pandemic economy and protecting Canada’s Arctic interests into the far future.”

Philippe Piron, president and CEO of GE Power Conversion, said, “GE are ready to begin work with Davie Shipbuilding to deliver Canada’s new generation of polar class ships. GE and Davie skills are complementary. GE are prepared to deliver the robust systems and equipment that are essential for the powerful polar class ships that Davie will build for Canada. We are excited to have the opportunity to strengthen Canada’s National Icebreaker Centre under Davie’s leadership, and we look forward to engaging broadly with Canada’s marine industry.”

GE joins Vard and Serco as partner in Davie’s polar program. Davie expects to soon announce steel, critical systems and other service partners.

Coast Guard, Navy offload

more than $211M worth of cocaine, marijuana in San Diego

The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) with embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 407 conducts enhanced counter-narcotics operations, Dec. 5, 2020. Gabrielle Giffords is deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations to support Joint Interagency Task Force South's mission, which includes counter illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. U.S. Navy photo.

SAN DIEGO – Coast Guard and Navy personnel offloaded approximately 11,400 pounds of cocaine and 9,000 pounds of marijuana Feb. 1, amounting to more than $211 million from seizures in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The offload is the result of interdictions made by Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 407 (LEDET) personnel, who operated aboard the USS Gabrielle Giffords, and three separate Coast Guard cutter crews between October and December.

“When you are covering a drug-smuggling transit zone the size of the continental United States, every ship makes a huge difference,” said Lt. Jonathan Dietrich. “The seamless integration between our Law Enforcement Detachment and the crew of the USS Gabrielle Giffords was a major reason why we were successful in interdicting such a large amount of drugs and prevent them from reaching our streets.”

The total amount of drugs offloaded included the following unit and Coast Guard ships:

- LEDET 407 was responsible for five cases seizing 10,570 pounds of cocaine and 4,100 pounds of marijuana
- The Seneca (WMEC-906) was responsible for one case seizing 350 pounds of cocaine
- The Legare (WMEC-912) was responsible for one case seizing 53 pounds of cocaine and 3,400 pounds of marijuana
- The Spencer (WMEC-905) was responsible for one case seizing 420 pounds of cocaine and 1,450 pounds of marijuana

“The impressive results of the USS Gabrielle Giffords deployment and drug offload represent more than just a local victory of keeping drugs off our streets,” said Rear Admiral Brian Penoyer. “The Coast Guard and the Navy have worked together for years to keep our waters and shores safe from a number of maritime threats, and we are honored to continue that tradition as we look toward the future.”

The Coast Guard narcotics interdiction efforts are aimed at thwarting transnational criminal organizations, which are fueled by drug trafficking money. Operations like these attack

supply networks in Central and South America. The offload highlights the joint impacts that a Coast Guard unit along with the Navy can have, when working together.

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command increased counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions for these interdictions by United States Attorney’s Offices from the Middle District of Florida, the Southern District of Florida, and the Southern District of California. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

LEDET 407 is part of Tactical Law Enforcement Team-South based in Miami. The Seneca is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Boston. The Legare is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Spencer is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Boston.

BAE Systems to Sustain Air Traffic Control Systems Under $65.7M Navy Contract

Under the new contract, BAE Systems will provide sustainment and engineering services for air traffic control platforms, similar to the expeditionary ATC radar shown here being carried by a Marine Corps Humvee. U.S. Marine Corps

MCLEAN, Virginia – The U.S. Navy selected BAE Systems for a five-year $65.7 million single-award indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract for air traffic control (ATC) platform sustainment and engineering services, the company said in a Feb. 1 release.

BAE Systems will continue to use its engineering, technical, and operational expertise to develop, produce, equip, test, evaluate, sustain, and update key expeditionary ATC aviation systems for the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Webster Outlying Field.

"With this win, BAE Systems will provide expeditionary forces

with the capability to quickly establish an airfield with the radar and communications systems to safely recover and launch aircraft," said Lisa Hand, vice president and general manager of BAE Systems' Integrated Defense Solutions business. "We serve as the automation expert and technical coordinator, responsible for development and improvement of real-time ATC computer systems. Our radar technicians deploy around the world to support the warfighter; their work is resulting in quicker turnover to the end user, improved hardware reliability, and more accurate installation and precision in the field."

This new contract continues BAE Systems' more than a decade of supporting critical work on key systems, including the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS); Air Traffic Navigation, Integration, and Coordination System (ATNAVICS); Airfield Mobile Tactical Air Navigation System (AMTAC); and ATNAVICS Data Link System (ADLS). Under the contract, the company will develop and maintain operational software and supporting test beds, field change programs, and supplies for ATC systems. These systems are integral ATC tools that enhance platform flight safety, especially when end users are operating in new or rough terrain airfields with no existing military base.

Coast Guard Cutter Spencer Returns After $10M Cocaine, Marijuana Bust

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Spencer (WMEC 905) underway on patrol in the Eastern Pacific, January 2021. The crew covered over 11,000 miles seizing over $10 million of drugs and assisted in disrupting transnational crime organizations. U.S. Coast Guard

BOSTON – The Coast Guard Cutter Spencer (WMEC 905) crew returned home to Boston, Massachusetts, Jan. 28, after a 59-day patrol, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

The crew's seizure of 440 pounds of cocaine and 1,500 pounds of marijuana is valued at over $10 million and assisted in disrupting transnational crime organizations.

"After conducting operations in the Eastern Pacific, our crew is looking forward to returning home," said Cmdr. Thomas Rodzewicz, commanding officer. "We provided effective mission critical assets in multiple cases and were able to stop illicit drugs from landing on U.S. shores. As a crew, we came together to enjoy the holidays in a meaningful and memorable way while carrying out our duties. I am extremely proud of the crew's performance during this challenging

patrol.”

The Coast Guard’s Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, an advanced aerial interdiction unit, joined the Spencer crew to conduct the counter drug operations. These crews served in support of U.S. operations in partnership with other law enforcement agencies and fellow armed services dedicated to preserving the national security of the United States.

Since departing Boston in December, The Spencer crew covered over 11,000 miles and made two transits through the Panama Canal.

Coast Guard Cutter Spencer is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter with a crew of 100 members.

HMS Queen Elizabeth Assumes Role as Royal Navy’s New Fleet Flagship

The full U.K. Carrier Strike Group assembled for the first time during Group Exercise 2020 on Oct. 4. Aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth leads a flotilla of destroyers and frigates from the U.K., U.S. and the Netherlands, together with two Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. It is the most powerful task force assembled by any European Navy in almost 20 years. Royal Navy

LONDON — HMS Queen Elizabeth assumed the role of fleet flagship as the Royal Navy moves closer to deploying the world's most technologically advanced carrier strike group, the U.K. Ministry of Defence said in a Jan. 29 release.

Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral Jerry Kyd was received on the aircraft carrier to mark the transfer of the role from HMS Albion, while Royal Navy ships and shore establishments were informed by a signal at 1330.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, said: "The position of fleet flagship is a symbol of HMS Queen Elizabeth's importance to the nation, not just in restoring our carrier strike capability, but as a rolling statement of British

commitment to global security, prosperity and trade.

“It’s right that we bestow such a historic title now. In the coming months HMS Queen Elizabeth will lead the most ambitious Royal Navy deployment in decades,” Radakin said. She will be a focal point as we look forward to an extraordinary year.”

It was announced last week that the United Kingdom’s new flagship and Lightning Force of F-35B stealth strike fighters will also be complemented by a detachment of the fifth-generation aircraft from the U.S. Marine Corps, and a U.S. Navy destroyer during her first operational strike group deployment.

HMS Queen Elizabeth and her strike group will spend time developing collective war-fighting skills when NATO navies gather for exercise Strike Warrior off Scotland during the spring, before departing for the Mediterranean.

“It is a fantastic privilege for Queen Elizabeth to be made the fleet flagship as we prepare to sail at the heart of U.K.’s very high readiness Carrier Strike Group,” said Capt. Angus Essenhigh, commanding officer of the Queen Elizabeth. “We look forward to doing the nation proud as we deploy on operations for the first time.”

Last year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed that HMS Queen Elizabeth will be at the center of a carrier strike group deployment to the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and East Asia. She will embark F-35B from 617 Squadron (the “Dambusters”), Royal Navy Merlin helicopters, and be escorted and supported by Royal Navy Type 45 destroyers, Type 23 frigates and support ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Assault ship HMS Albion had been flagship since March 2018, deploying to the Indo-Pacific for 10 months; to the Baltic for major multi-national exercises; and latterly to the Mediterranean leading NATO security patrols and experimental warfare trials. Her sister ship, HMS Bulwark, previously led

the Fleet for four years.

“While it is with some sadness that we hand over the responsibility to HMS Queen Elizabeth, we are proud to be part of the transfer which marks a new era for the Royal Navy and the nation,” said Capt. Simon Kelly, commanding officer of HMS Albion.

Coast Guard Transfers 2 Suspected Smugglers, $8.5M in Seized Cocaine

Coast Guard offloads 302 kilograms of cocaine valued at $8.5

million, and transfers custody of two suspected smugglers to Caribbean Corridor Strike Force federal agents in San Juan, Puerto Rico Jan. 28, 2021, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel in the Caribbean Sea. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutters Mohawk and Charles David Jr. transferred custody of two suspected smugglers and $8.5 million in seized cocaine to federal agents at Coast Guard Base San Juan Jan. 28, following the interdiction of a drug smuggling go-fast vessel in the Caribbean Sea, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Jan. 29 release.

The interdiction was the result of multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) programs, and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF). The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for this case.

"This successful interdiction is a reflection of the seamless teamwork and the unwavering resolve between the Coast Guard, our federal law enforcement and Department of Defense partners to protect the nation's southernmost maritime border against narcotrafficking threats," said Cmdr. James L. Jarnac, Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk commanding officer. "The strength of our joint collaboration and partnerships is key to a safer Caribbean Region and disrupting transnational criminal organization activities through the interdiction of drug smuggling vessel's in the maritime domain."

The bust occurred during the afternoon of Jan. 24, 2021, after the aircrew of a maritime patrol aircraft detected a suspicious 25-foot go-fast vessel, approximately 200 nautical miles south of the Dominican Republic.

The Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk diverted in response to the

sighting and interdicted the go-fast vessel with the assistance of the cutter’s small boat. Following the interdiction, the Coast Guard Mohawk’s boarding team located and recovered nine bales of suspected contraband, which weighed approximately 302 kilograms (666 pounds) and tested positive for cocaine.

The crew of the cutter Mohawk embarked the seized contraband and the two men from the go-fast vessel, who both claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals. The Coast Guard Cutter Charles David Jr. later embarked the two suspected smugglers and a representative sample of the contraband that were disembarked in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Caribbean Corridor Strike Force federal law enforcement agents received custody.

Cutter Charles David Jr. is a 154-foot fast response cutter, while the Cutter Mohawk is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter, both homeported in Key West, Florida.