Navy Takes Delivery of Final Block II Super Hornet, Looks Ahead to Block III

A Block II F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Mediterranean Sea on April 5. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Rebekah Watkins

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy took delivery of the final Block II Super Hornet, closing out a run of 322 one-seater F/A-18Es and 286 two-seated F/A-18Fs, on April 17, the Navy's Program Executive Office-Tactical Aircraft said in a release.

Since 2005, F/A-18 Super Hornet Block II aircraft have been rolling off Boeing's production line and serving as the Navy's multimission capable workhorse.

"Aircraft E322 will leave Boeing's production line and head straight to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34 based in [Naval Air Station] Oceana," said Cmdr. Tyler Tennille, of the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), who

oversees acceptance testing.

“When the Super Hornets first came online, they were a game-changer,” he said, pointing to the Block II’s Active Electronically Scanned Array radar as well as larger displays, upgraded sensors and avionics and increased range and capability to employ an arsenal of precision weapons that delivered advanced lethality and mission flexibility for the service.

The airframe was built with an open mission systems architecture, which has enabled easy integration of new weapons and technologies. The Block II Super Hornet serves as the Navy’s responsive aircraft, capable across the full mission spectrum, including air superiority, fighter escort, reconnaissance, aerial refueling, close air support, air defense suppression and day/night precision strike.

This aircraft been the backbone of the Navy’s carrier air wing and has proven itself repeatedly during numerous operations where it has been the pre-eminent platform performing multiple missions, sometimes rapidly reconfiguring on the fly.

Even though it is substantially larger – about 7,000 pounds heavier and a 50% higher range, the Super Hornet delivered with fewer parts and lower maintenance demands than its predecessor, the Hornet.

“Delivery of this last production Block II Super Hornet is hardly the end of an era, but rather a stepping stone along the path to continuously evolving our platforms to meet the Navy’s ever-evolving needs,” said Capt. Jason Denney, program manager of the F/A-18 and EA-18 Program Office.

Following the delivery of these aircraft, Tennille said he expects the transition from Block IIs to Block IIIs to be seamless.

The capabilities and successes of the Block II program were leveraged by the Navy in awarding a multiyear procurement contract for Block III Super Hornets to Boeing in March 2019, totaling about $4 billion. The Navy will procure 72 Block III Super Hornets between fiscal years 2019 and 2021.

Boeing is expected to deliver the Block III test jets to the Navy as early as late spring, where subsequent testing will commence at both Naval Air Station Patuxent River and Naval Air Weapons System China Lake. This latest version of the Super Hornet includes an advanced cockpit system, advanced network infrastructure, reduced radar cross-section and a 10,000-flight hour lifespan.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Next-Gen Destroyer

Capt. Scott Carroll, commander of Zumwalt Squadron One, delivers remarks during the establishment ceremony of Surface Development Squadron ONE last May. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Woody S. Paschall

SAN DIEGO – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of the USS Zumwalt, the lead ship of the Navy's next generation of multimission surface combatants, on April 24, Program Executive Office (PEO)-Ships said in a release.

Following this delivery, the ship will transition from combat systems activation to the next phase of developmental and integrated at-sea testing.

This event also marks a milestone of the dual delivery approach for the Zumwalt (DDG 1000), which achieved hull, mechanical and electrical delivery from shipbuilder General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works (BIW) in May 2016.

Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems was the prime contractor

for the Zumwalt combat system and has lead activation and integration for Zumwalt-class ships both in Bath, Maine, and San Diego.

“Delivery is an important milestone for the Navy, as DDG 1000 continues more advanced at-sea testing of the Zumwalt combat system,” said Capt. Kevin Smith, DDG 1000 program manager for PEO-Ships.

“The combat test team, consisting of the DDG 1000 sailors, Raytheon engineers and Navy field-activity teams, have worked diligently to get USS Zumwalt ready for more complex, multimission at-sea testing. I am excited to begin demonstrating the performance of this incredible ship.”

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>
> *Capt. Kevin Smith, DDG 1000 program manager, PEO-Ships*

With delivery, USS Zumwalt joins the U.S. Pacific Fleet battle force and remains assigned to Surface Development Squadron One. In addition to at-sea testing of the Zumwalt combat system, DDG 1000 also will operate as an enabler in the acceleration of new warfighting capabilities and rapid development and validation of operational tactics, techniques and procedures.

The 610-foot, wave-piercing tumblehome ship design provides a wide array of advancements. Employing the Integrated Power System (IPS), DDG 1000 has the capacity to distribute 1000 volts of direct current across the ships’ entirety, allowing for enhanced power capability for various operational requirements. Additionally, the shape of the superstructure and the arrangement of its antennas significantly reduce radar cross section, making the ship less visible to enemy radars.

“Every day the ship is at sea, the officers and crew learn more about her capability, and can immediately inform the continued development of tactics, techniques, and procedures to not only integrate Zumwalt into the fleet, but to advance the Navy’s understanding of operations with a stealth destroyer,” said Capt. Andrew Carlson, the ship’s commanding officer.

“After sailing over 9,000 miles and 100 days at sea in 2019, we are absolutely looking forward to more aggressive at-sea testing and validation of the combat systems leading to achievement of initial operational capability.”

The USS Zumwalt is the first ship of the Zumwalt-class destroyers. The USS Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001) is homeported in San Diego and is undergoing combat systems activation. The third and final ship of the class, the future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002), is under construction at BIW’s shipyard in Bath.

The USS Zumwalt arrives at its new homeport in San Diego in December 2016. U.S. Navy/Petty Officer 3rd Class Emiline L. M. Senn

Navy Awards Orders 9th Full-Rate Production Lot of AARGMs

A 2012 photo of an F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to the Salty Dogs of Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23 conducting a captive carry flight test of an AGM-88E Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland. U.S. Navy / Greg L. Davis

LOS ANGELES – The U.S. Navy has awarded Northrop Grumman Corp. $165 million for Lot 9 full-rate production (FRP) of the AGM-88E Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile (AARGM), the company said in an April 23 release. Assets will include all-up round missiles and captive air training missiles for the U.S. Navy and foreign military sales.

"AARGM provides the U.S. Navy and allies unmatched protection to detect and defeat surface-to-air-threats regardless of

threat tactics and capabilities," said Gordon Turner, vice president, advanced weapons, Northrop Grumman.

Northrop Grumman's AARGM is a supersonic, air-launched tactical missile system, upgrading legacy AGM-88 HARM systems with advanced capability to perform suppression and destruction of enemy air defense missions. AARGM is the most advanced system for pilots against today's modern surface-to-air threats, according to the company. It is able to engage land- and sea-based air-defense threats, as well as striking, time-sensitive targets.

AARGM is a U.S. Navy and Italian air force international cooperative major defense acquisition program with the U.S. Navy as the executive agent. AARGM is currently deployed and supporting operational requirements for the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. The missile is integrated into the weapons systems on the FA-18C/D Hornet, FA-18E/F Super Hornet, EA-18G Growler aircraft and the Tornado Electronic Combat and Reconnaissance aircraft utilized by the Italian air force.

Coast Guard, Panamanian Authorities Stop Drug-Smuggling Operation Near Panama

A Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba small boat crew recovered 40 bales of cocaine April 13, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD / Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba

MIAMI – The Coast Guard stopped a drug smuggling operation April 13 in international waters northeast of Panama, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an April 23 release.

A Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew, forward deployed with the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC-907), spotted a suspect fishing vessel with five people aboard. The cutter Escanaba crew sent a small boat crew to the scene.

The cutter Escanaba small boat crew recovered 40 bales of cocaine, and a nearby Panamanian law enforcement boat crew recovered 43 bales, taking a total approximately $60 million wholesale that would have otherwise funded transnational criminal organizations. The 40 bales recovered by the Escanaba crew were transferred to the Coast Guard Cutter Raymond Evans (WPC-1110) crew.

“During this uncertain time, our U.S. military forces continue to aggressively interdict narcotics being smuggled in our hemisphere,” said Vice Adm. Scott Buschman, Coast Guard Atlantic Area commander. “Like the crew of the Escanaba, we will continue to protect our nation’s maritime borders, ensure our security and carry out all Coast Guard’s missions.”

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command began enhanced counternarcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere

to disrupt the flow of drugs in support of presidential national security objectives. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by the members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

General Atomics' EMALS and AAG Support Successful Ford Flight Deck Certification

An F/A-18F Super Hornet, attached to the "Gladiators" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) during flight operations, March 28, 2020. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean conducting carrier qualifications. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Sawyer Connally

SAN DIEGO – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS) announced April 23 that successful USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78)

Flight Deck Certification (FDC) has been completed with the support of the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) and advanced arresting gear (AAG) system. The number of aircraft to have landed and taken off from CVN 78 now totals more than 2,000. CVN 78 used fleet squadrons from Carrier Air Wing Eight, as well as pilots from Strike Fighter Squadron 106 and Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 120 to obtain hundreds of sorties over a two-week period with all arrested landings and catapult launches completed safely.

“We continue to see EMALS and AAG perform according to specifications to execute cats and traps with the objective of reaching the robust evolution rates necessary for combat,” stated Scott Forney, president of GA-EMS. “We are working closely with the Navy and CVN 78 crew to ensure operational performance is achieved. We remain extremely proud of our team, the squadrons’ pilots and the ship’s crew for all their hard work and dedication and look forward to continuing success as CVN 78 undergoes these continued at sea periods.”

FDC is a qualification of the ship’s various aviation systems and includes the crews’ qualification to operate the numerous systems. FDC was completed March 20 following day and night launch and recovery exercises with F/A-18E/F Super Hornets. FDC is intended to qualify and prove ship and crew capabilities under operational conditions that can occur while on deployment.

On Jan. 31, CVN 78 completed aircraft compatibility testing, a significant milestone that exhibited EMALS and AAG’s ability to launch and recover five types of aircraft in varying configurations – four of which for the first time. CVN 78 proved to accommodate the current naval air wing, including F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, C-2A Greyhound, EA-18G Growler and T-45C Goshawk aircraft.

GA-EMS is delivering EMALS and AAG for the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) and USS Enterprise (CVN 80).

Coast Guard, Dominican Navy Interdict Migrants, Arrest Smugglers

Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle's cutter boat on scene with a 25-foot illegal migrant vessel interdicted on April 20 south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle and a Dominican Republic navy vessel combined efforts on April 20 during the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage transporting 15 migrants in waters south of Isla Saona, according to a Coast Guard 7th District release.

The interdiction, which was part of a joint effort between the Coast Guard, the Dominican navy and U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigations, led to

Dominican authorities arresting Edgar Batista Matos and Manauris Andujar Manon, who reportedly are associated with human smuggling activities and the organization of illegal migrant voyages.

During a patrol in the Caribbean on April 20, the crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft detected a suspect migrant vessel south of Isla Saona. While patrolling nearby waters, the cutter Joseph Doyle responded to the sighting and interdicted the 25-foot make-shift vessel that was carrying 15 migrants, 13 men and two women of Dominican nationality. Shortly thereafter, a responding Dominican Republic Navy vessel arrived on scene and the crew took custody of the migrants and towed the interdicted vessel back to the Dominican Republic.

Following the interdiction, Dominican naval authorities informed the Coast Guard that the known smugglers were found to be among the interdicted migrants.

“This successful interdiction and arrest of two smugglers was the result of the strong partnership and collaboration that exists between the Coast Guard and Dominican Republic navy,” said Capt. Eric King, commander of Coast Guard Sector San Juan.

“The results achieved today, despite the challenging operational environment presented by the global COVID-19 pandemic, reflect the commitment and daily efforts carried out by both countries to protect our borders from existing maritime threats and safeguard the lives of migrants who face the danger of an uncertain and potentially perilous voyage.”

The Joseph Doyle is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan.

Cutter Returns Home After Seizing $21.5 Million in Cocaine During Patrol

A Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast boarding team searches a suspected smuggling vessel on March 15 interdicted by the crew, resulting in 1,252 pounds of cocaine seized, worth an estimated $21.5 million, and three suspected smugglers detained. U.S. Coast Guard

ASTORIA, Ore. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast returned home on April 17 to Astoria following a 65-day counter-narcotic patrol to the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area reported.

The cutter intercepted and boarded five suspected smuggling vessels, including one go-fast-style panga, while patrolling international waters off the coasts of Mexico and Central America. Steadfast's crew apprehended three suspected smugglers and seized 1,252 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated $21.5 million.

"I am inspired daily by the tenacity and professionalism of this crew," said Cmdr. Dan Ursino, the Steadfast's commanding officer. "Their resilience to remain focused, in light of the global health crisis and uncertainty back home, has been nothing short of remarkable. Knowing the importance and impact of keeping these harmful substances from reaching our streets help to keep us going."

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command began enhanced 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, U.S. 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.

Steadfast also continued to participate in the Columbia River Maritime Museum's Mini Boat Project, which connects students from local Oregon elementary schools with their peers in Japan. Students learn about the significance of ocean currents and weather while building miniature boats to send across the ocean to one another. During this patrol, Steadfast launched two boats, Boat-A-Lohti and Philbert, about 200 miles off the southern tip of Baja, Mexico. Follow along here.

Commissioned in 1968, Steadfast is one of two Reliance-class cutters homeported in Astoria. Reliance-class cutters are 210-feet long, 34-feet wide and have a 1,100 long-ton displacement. The ships hold a crew of 76 and have served the

nation for more than 50 years.

Bollinger Delivers Articulated Tug and Barge Unit to Crowley Fuels

LOCKPORT, La. – Bollinger Shipyards Lockport delivered an articulated tug-barge (ATB) unit capable of transporting multiple clean petroleum products in the Alaska market to Crowley Fuels, the Alaska-based petroleum transportation, distribution and sales unit of Crowley Maritime Corp.

Crowley Shipping provided vessel construction management services in Bollinger Marine Fabricators, Bollinger's Amelia, Louisiana, facility from the final design phase through delivery. The company's Seattle-based naval architecture and marine engineering firm, Jensen Maritime, provided the functional design. Bollinger's engineering team provided the integration, detail design and construction package.

"On behalf of our skilled workforce, along with a strong operational support group, the Bollinger team is proud to have built this ATB for Crowley Fuels," said Ben Bordelon, Bollinger Shipyards president and CEO. "Contracts like this to build Jones Act-classed ATB units, create and protect many jobs for U.S. mariners, shipyards and ancillary vendors, and that strengthens our local and regional industrial base."

The Alaska-class ATB unit consists of one twin Z-Drive, 7,000-horsepower ocean tugboat paired with an ocean barge.

The ATB was designed and built to meet ice class

and polar code requirements, which include increased structural framing and shell plating and extended zero discharge endurance. The double-hulled design also features a barge form factor to achieve high-cargo capacity on minimal draft.

The tug is fitted with two GE 8L250 main engines that meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Tier 4 emissions standards. The generators on the tug and barge meet EPA Tier 3 and IMO Tier II emissions standards. In addition, a closed loop, freshwater ballast system will eliminate the need to discharge tug ballast water into the sea.

Corps Requests Proposals for Tropical Uniforms; Plans to Field Later This Year

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) on April 14 released a request for proposals to industry for new tropical uniforms for Marines to wear while training or embarking on missions in warm-weather climates, MCSC public affairs said in a release.

The Marine Corps Tropical Combat Uniform (MCTCU) is a rapid-dry, breathable uniform that can sustain for prolonged periods in hot, humid and wet environments. The MCTCU will provide an alternative to the current combat utility uniform and combat boot.

"This new tropical uniform allows Marines to be more comfortable and less fatigued while focusing on the mission at hand," said Lou Curcio, MCSC's MCTCU project officer.

The MCTCU is made up of trousers, a blouse and a pair of boots. The trousers and blouse – the focus of the RFP – are made of the same blend of cotton and nylon as the current combat utility uniform and features the same camouflage pattern. The difference is in the weave and weight, resulting in a lighter material that dries more quickly.

Both pieces of clothing are treated with permethrin to provide protection from insects.

The boots, awarded on a separate contract, are also lightweight, with self-cleaning soles to improve mobility in a tropical environment. They are more than a pound lighter than the current boot fielded by the Marine Corps.

"MCTCU will bring many advantages during training and combat in tropical environments," Curcio said. "For all the sacrifices and challenges they endure, Marines deserve a uniform like this one."

Between June and September 2017, hundreds of Marines participated in various user evaluations to assess the durability, fit and function of a prototype tropical uniform. The prototype was made up of a fabric blend of nylon and cotton, designed to dry faster and keep Marines cooler in warm climates.

MCSC's Program Manager for Infantry Combat Equipment leveraged this feedback to inform industry solicitations and other decisions.

"Many Marines said the MCTCU feels like pajamas, appreciating how lightweight it is," Curcio said. "They also noted how quickly the uniform dries upon getting wet."

Based on January 2020 market research and responses to a November 2019 request for information, the Marine Corps should see a potential cost reduction of at least 25% and as much as 60% per uniform.

MCSC plans to purchase 70,000 trousers, blouses and pairs of boots for the MCTCU to support fleet training or operating in tropical climates. The command procured more than 10,000 sets of blouses and trousers under a manufacturing and development effort.

Fielding of the MCTCU is slated for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020.

Navy Awards $99.8 Million to Rebuild Earthquake-Damaged China Lake Facilities

SAN DIEGO – Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Southwest on April 14 awarded a $99.8 million task order for the design and construction of 25 new ordnance magazines and an inert storage facility at Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, California, according to NAVFAC Southwest public affairs.

Last July, two major earthquakes struck the China Lake area. The task order will fund the demolition of an inert storage facility and 32 critically damaged magazines and design and construct 25 new modern magazines as well as an inert storage facility.

Construction will include electrical, telecommunications, intrusion detection systems, roadway and apron paving, a bridge crane and positive drainage for the new magazines and storage facility.

The task order is part of a multiple award construction

contract. The awardee, Reyes Construction of Pomona, California, was one of multiple companies to submit proposals.

“This is the first major new construction project awarded in support of the NAWS China Lake earthquake recovery effort and is an important part of restoring the installation to its full operational capability,” said Capt. Mike Oestereicher, commanding officer of NAVFAC Southwest.

“Mission-critical operations and RDT&E support to the fleet were adversely impacted by the damaged magazines, with ordnance being jam-stowed in the handful of remaining adequate magazines or shipped off-base to other sites,” Oestereicher said. “This project will restore that lost capability and help bring NAWS China Lake back up to full readiness.”

“Award of this project in such a short time represents a tremendous team effort with support from a myriad of stakeholders and support organizations,” said Cmdr. Dan Stokes, NAVFAC Southwest assistant operations officer.

“We are eager to move forward into the construction phase to help restore full mission capability to the base and to provide support to the fleet.”

NAWS China Lake is in the western Mojave Desert region of California, about 150 miles north of Los Angeles. China Lake’s mission is to support the Navy’s research, testing and evaluation missions to provide cutting-edge weapons systems to the warfighter.

The installation is the Navy’s largest single landholding. In total, its two ranges and main site cover more than 1.1 million acres, an area larger than Rhode Island.

“This critical investment will bring our weapons storage capability into the modern era and will support testing

programs for current and future weapons systems," said Capt. Jason "Sherm" Sherman, Navy Munitions Command Pacific, CONUS West Division commander and Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach commanding officer. "Importantly at China Lake, these new magazines will be seismically rated to modern standards for increased environmental resiliency."

The project is scheduled for completion by August 2022.