Textron Delivers First Next-Generation Ship-to-Shore Connector to the Navy

The next-generation air-cushion vehicle, Ship-to-Shore Connector. Textron Systems Corp.

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Textron Systems Corp. successfully delivered its first next-generation air-cushion vehicle, Ship-to-Shore Connector (SSC) Craft 100, to the U.S. Navy in February, the company announced.

"We are proud to deliver the first of many Ship-to-Shore Connectors to the U.S. Navy," said Henry Finneral, senior vice president of Textron Systems. "This delivery is the result of the dedication by the joint Navy and industry team and will provide the Navy with a needed capability to rapidly transport material, personnel and humanitarian assistance to shorelines."

Prior to delivery, Craft 100 underwent integrated testing to demonstrate the capability of its fly-by-wire steering, electrical and propulsion systems and completed its acceptance trials in December 2019.

As the replacement for the existing fleet of Landing Craft, Air-Cushion (LCAC) vehicles, follow-on SSCs will primarily transport weapon systems, equipment, cargo and personnel through tough environmental conditions to the beach. The craft can travel at a sustained 35 knots and shares less than 1% of legacy LCAC original parts, representing a true upgrade for the LCAC forces at Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 4, ACU 5, and Naval Beachmaster Unit 7. The SSC also has an increased payload and service life of 30 years.

The SSC is constructed at Textron Systems in New Orleans and

built with similar configurations, dimensions and clearances to existing LCAC, ensuring the compatibility of this next-generation air cushion vehicle with existing well deck-equipped amphibious ships as well as expeditionary transfer docks and expeditionary sea bases.

The Navy will continue to utilize Craft 100 as a test and training craft. There are 13 additional SSCs in various states of production. Builder's trials for Craft 101 are scheduled for the first quarter of this year with acceptance trials following in the spring.

GE Engines to Power Four New Chamsuri II-Class Patrol Boats for Korean Navy

EVENDALE, Ohio – GE Marine's 4.6 MW LM500 marine gas turbines will power ships 13 through 16 of the Republic of Korea Navy's PKX-B patrol boat program, the company said in a release.

The 220-ton PKX-B Chamsuri II class ships will be built by the Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction shipyard, and the GE LM500 gas turbine modules will be manufactured, assembled and tested in-country by Hanwha Aerospace.

In December 2019, the ROK Navy launched PKX-B ships five through eight with expectations to be delivered to the fleet by the end of 2020. Each ship can attain speeds over 40 knots powered by two GE LM500 gas turbines and two diesel engines in a combined diesel and gas turbine (CODAG) configuration.

The PKX-B complements the larger, 500-ton PKX-A Gumdoksuri

class patrol boats to provide maritime protection and defense in and along the ROK's seaways. Both the PKX-A and PKX-B ships are powered by GE LM500 marine gas turbines; the first PKX-A Gumdoksuri in the 18-ship program entered service in 2008.

"Thanks to our long-standing relationships in the Republic of Korea, we worked directly with key component manufacturers on a complete system design analysis and improvement program," said GE's Kris Shepherd, vice president and general manager of marine operations. "The end result was the PKX-B realized a 45% reduction in size and weight from its PKX-A predecessor by optimizing the package and gas turbine auxiliary systems to include an electric start system."

Navy Secretary to Commission Future Carrier 2030 Task Force

A C-2A Greyhound prepares to move across the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Angel Thuy Jaskuloski

WASHINGTON – Acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly announced that he is commissioning a Blue-Ribbon Future Carrier 2030 (FC-2030) Task Force to conduct a six-month study that will reimagine the future of the aircraft carrier and carrier-based naval aviation (manned and unmanned) for 2030 and beyond.

FC-2030 will be complementary to, and informed by, a broad review of national shipbuilding requirements being conducted

by Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist. U.S. Navy and Marine Corps uniformed and civilian leadership will be engaged in both efforts.

FC-2030 will attract current and former leaders from Congress, leaders from the U.S. shipbuilding and supporting technology industries and current and former Pentagon leaders as well as thought leaders at war colleges, think-tanks and futurists from around the nation.

“The long-term challenges facing our nation and the world demand clear-eyed assessments and hard choices,” Modly said. “Because we have four new Ford carriers under contract, we have some time to reimagine what comes next. Any assessment we do must consider cost, survivability and the critical national requirement to sustain an industrial base that can produce the ships we need –ships that will contribute to a superior, integrated naval force for the 2030s and far beyond.

“Aircraft carrier construction sustains nearly 60,000 skilled jobs in over 46 states,” Modly added. “It can’t be simply turned on and off like a faucet. We must be thoughtful in how we approach changes as they will have lasting impacts on our national industrial competitiveness and employment.”

The task force will be led by an executive director chosen from within the Department of the Navy’s Secretariat staff and assisted on a collateral-duty basis by representatives from the Office of Naval Research and the deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Development.

With an executive director, the FC-2030 senior executive panel will consist of thought leaders with historical records of leading and contributing to large change in maritime defense strategies and programs. Former Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) has agreed to serve as the honorary chairman of the executive panel. Former Nav Secretary John Lehman, former acting Deputy Defense Secretary Christine Fox, former

Deputy Navy Undersecretary Seth Cropsey and former Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) have agreed to serve as executive members of the panel.

“Our future strength will be determined as much by the gray matter we apply to our challenges as the gray hulls we build,” Modly said. “We need the best minds from both inside and outside of government focused on this issue.”

The study will be conducted with the assistance of the Naval University System (U.S. Naval Academy, Naval War College, Marine Corps University and Naval Postgraduate School) as well as eligible federally funded research and development centers and naval warfare centers.

Construction Begins on Bath Iron Works’ First Flight III Arleigh Burke Destroyer

BATH, Maine – Construction of the future USS Louis H. Wilson Jr. (DDG 126) officially began at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) shipyard on March 3. The milestone was marked by a ceremony at BIW’s structural fabrication facility in Brunswick, Maine, the Program Executive Office (PEO)-Ships said in a release.

DDG 126 will be the first Arleigh Burke-class destroyer built in the Flight III configuration at BIW. Flight III destroyers will have improved capability and capacity to perform anti-air warfare and ballistic missile defense in support of the integrated air and missile defense mission.

This system delivers quick reaction time, high firepower, and increased electronic countermeasures capability for anti-air warfare.

The ship will honor Marine Corps Gen. Louis Hugh Wilson Jr., who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his leadership and daring combat tactics in the Battle of Guam in 1944. During a prolonged firefight with Japanese forces, Wilson led Marines under his command across rugged terrain to secure a strategic objective. Despite being wounded three times, Wilson and his men defended their position for more than 10 hours of combat. The following day, Wilson led a 17-man patrol to capture, secure, and hold a second position.

“This is a tremendous occasion as we mark the start of construction on BIW’s first Flight III Arleigh Burke-class destroyer.” said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51 class program manager, PEO-Ships.

“General Wilson embodied the spirit of our nation in his will to protect his fellow Marines and countrymen. What better way to honor him than to build a highly capable warship that advances our Navy’s ability to protect and defend our nation.”

BIW also is in production on the future Arleigh Burke-class destroyers Daniel Inouye (DDG 118), Carl M. Levin (DDG 120), John Basilone (DDG 122), Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) and Patrick Gallagher (DDG 127) as well as the Zumwalt-class destroyer Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002).

Lockheed Delivers 500th F-35 Aircraft; Strike Fighter Surpasses 250,000 Flight Hours

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Enrico Rabina directs an F-35B Lightning II fighter to take off from the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS America. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Vance Hand

FORT WORTH, Texas – Lockheed Martin and the F-35 Joint Program Office have delivered the 500th F-35 Lightning II strike fighter, the company said March 3. The F-35 surpassed 250,000 flight hours last month.

The 500th production aircraft is a U.S. Air Force F-35A, to be delivered to the Burlington Air National Guard Base in Vermont. The 500 F-35s include 354 F-35A conventional takeoff and landing variants, 108 F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing variants for the U.S. Marine Corps and 38 F-35C carrier variants for the Navy and international customers. The 250,000 flight hours include developmental test jets and training, operational, U.S. and international F-35s.

"These milestones are a testament to the talent and dedication of the joint government, military and industry teams," said Greg Ulmer, Lockheed's vice president and general manager of the F-35 program. "The F-35 is delivering an unprecedented fifth-generation combat capability to the warfighter at the cost of a fourth-generation legacy aircraft."

The F-35 operates from 23 bases worldwide. More than 985 pilots and over 8,890 maintainers are trained. Nine nations use the F-35 from their home soil, eight services have

declared initial operating capability and four services have employed F-35s in combat operations.

Cutter Munro Returns After Counter-Drug Patrol; $115 Million in Cocaine Seized

Lt. j.g. Michelle McGill serves as landing signal officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Munro as security response team members conduct fast-rope exercises from a U.S. Navy MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter off the coast of San Diego on Dec. 16. U.S. Coast Guard/Ensign Brooke Harkrader

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The Coast Guard Cutter Munro returned home on March 1 after a 78-day deployment, during which the crew seized an estimated $115 million worth of cocaine from suspected smugglers in the eastern Pacific Ocean, according to a Coast Guard Pacific Area release.

The crew patrolled known drug-transit zones of the eastern Pacific from late December to mid-January and interdicted three suspected drug-smuggling vessels that carried 6,680 pounds of pure cocaine.

The cocaine seized by Munro's crew and three other Coast Guard cutters was part of a nearly 20,000-pound haul of the drug offloaded in San Diego on Feb. 11.

This patrol was Munro's second deployment to the eastern Pacific since the cutter's 2017 commissioning. Last July, Vice

President Mike Pence attended Munro's offload of more than 39,000 pounds of cocaine and 933 pounds of marijuana worth more than $500 million. That offload included contraband found aboard a self-propelled, semi-submersible vessel interdicted by Munro's crew on June 18 that was carrying more than 17,000 pounds of cocaine.

Following February's offload, the crew began a multiweek tailored ship's training availability – a set of drills, inspections and exercises that assess a ship's mission readiness and damage control capabilities. The crew passed all 136 required drills, with an overall average of 97%.

"I truly could not have asked for a better crew with whom to share these memories, but we didn't do this alone," said Capt. Jim Estramonte, the Munro's commanding officer. "Through all our adventures, the friends and family members of Munro's crew have supported us. It is their hard work at home that allows us to serve. Their sacrifice does not go unnoticed. So thank you to all those who make our success possible."

Munro is one of four national security cutters homeported in Alameda. These Legend-class cutters are 418 feet long, 54 feet wide and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed in excess of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, endurance of up to 90 days and can hold a crew of nearly 150.

NAVAIR Extends Life of F-16 Adversary Aircraft

An F-16A Fighting Falcon during a maneuver near Naval Air Station Fallon, Nevada. Naval Air Systems Command

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Specialized and Proven Aircraft program office (PMA-226) recently completed a modification on several U.S. Navy F-16A Fighting Falcon aircraft to increase readiness and service life, according to Naval Air Systems Command.

The FalconUp modification improves F-16A readiness by extending their fatigue lives by more than 500 hours and provides the configuration baseline to incorporate the funded Falcon Star program, which adds an additional 3,750 hours to the service lives of the aircraft.

“The FalconUp upgrade incorporates structural improvements that extend the service life of the aircraft from 3,665 hours to 4,250 hours,” said Capt. Ramiro Flores, PMA-226’s program manager. “The program procured and installed proven structural modification kits on 10 U.S. Navy aircraft that enhanced and strengthened their internal structure.”

PMA-226 used a rapid acquisition approach, in this case a build-to-print strategy to minimize risk and eliminate the need for test plans, systems engineering plans and design reviews. Build-to-print is a process in which a manufacturer produces products, equipment or components according to the customer’s exact specifications.

The program office leveraged existing designs that the U.S. Air Force and international partners have used to install the modification and have been including it in production of the F-16 for more than two decades. The Navy competitively awarded the contract to ES3 Prime Logistics Group Inc., which has previously manufactured the same components for the Air Force and PMA-226.

“Since the proven design has flown thousands of hours in this configuration, and it doesn’t require expansion of the current flight envelope, we were able to deliver this training capability to the warfighter much faster than a traditional

program," said Lt. Cmdr. Heather Bliss, PMA-226 adversary program team co-lead.

"The upgrade allows the Navy to provide mission ready adversary aircraft for Naval aviation advanced tactical and aerial combat training, extending the operational life of the F-16A through 2025," said Boyd Forsythe, PMA-226 adversary program team lead.

2nd Fleet Conducts Convoy Exercise in Atlantic

A convoy made up of the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (foreground), the vehicle carrier MV Resolve (center) and the MSC cargo ship USNS Benavidez steam in formation. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Waters

NORFOLK, Va. – U.S. 2nd Fleet, on behalf of U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) and with Military Sealift Command (MSC), is conducting convoy operations across the Atlantic, employing the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf alongside USNS Benavidez, MV Resolve and MV Patriot, the 2nd Fleet said in a release.

Sealift remains the primary method for transporting military equipment, supplies and materiel around the world. With the return of peer competition and access to sea lanes no longer guaranteed, the Navy and MSC train together to ensure successful delivery and sustainment of combat power.

"In a real-world conflict, much of the military equipment must still go by sealift, which makes convoy operations a critical skill set to maintain and practice," said Capt. Hans E. Lynch,

commodore of MSC Atlantic. “In the last five years, there has been an increased emphasis on including Merchant Marine shipping in large-scale exercises to enhance tactical proficiency. Exercises that incorporate convoy operations are an extension of that ongoing tactical training.”

This exercise is simulating an opposed transit, testing the fleets’ abilities to safely cross the Atlantic and new ways of conducting a convoy in today’s environment. Convoy operations were critical during World War I and World War II as the primary method for moving troops and military equipment, supplies and materiel to Europe. After WWII, convoys became less prevalent in the Atlantic theater, although still practiced in other areas of operation.

> *“In a real-world conflict, much of the military equipment must still go by sealift, which makes convoy operations a critical skill set to maintain and practice.”*
>
> *Capt. Hans E. Lynch, commodore of MSC Atlantic*

“The Atlantic is a battlespace that cannot be ignored,” said Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, commander of the 2nd Fleet. “We need to be prepared to operate at the high end alongside our allies, partners and adversaries alike as soon as we’re underway.”

During its operations in the Atlantic, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, along with P-8s from VP-4 and a U.S. submarine, cleared the maritime battlespace prior to the transit of the Vella Gulf-escorted MSC convoy.

“This exercise allows us to sharpen our ability to move critical resources across the Atlantic, from the United States to Europe,” said Adm. James G. Foggo III, commander of NAVEUR.

Foggo added: “The transatlantic bridge is just as important

today for moving troops and military equipment, supplies and materiel from the United States to Europe as it has been at any point in history.”

The 2nd and 6th fleets work together to ensure the security of sea lanes of communication in the Atlantic. If called upon, the Pentagon’s sealift transportation fleet expects to move about 90% of required assets from the U.S. to the conflict theater. The safest and quickest way to get needed materials to the front lines is via maritime convoy.

“We, as a Navy, are inherently linked with the broader maritime industry, and this exercise provides a great opportunity to train like we fight,” said Capt. Andrew Fitzpatrick, the Vella Gulf’s commander. “Practicing convoy operations flexes a blue-water, high-end skill for the first time in many years, enabling us all to operate on, above and below the sea in a contested environment.”

MSC operates about 110 noncombatant, civilian-crewed ships that replenish Navy ships, conduct specialized missions, strategically preposition combat cargo at sea around the world and move military cargo and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces and coalition partners.

C2F tests operational authorities over assigned ships, aircraft and landing forces on the East Coast and the Atlantic Ocean. When directed, C2F conducts exercises and operations within the U.S. European Command area of responsibility as an expeditionary fleet.

BAE Secures $188 Million Contract for Navy Aegis Combat System

MCLEAN, Va. – BAE Systems Inc. was awarded a five-year $188.2 million contract to provide the U.S. Navy's Aegis Technical Representative organization with large-scale system engineering, integration and testing expertise for the Aegis weapons and combat systems aboard Navy surface ships, the company announced.

"BAE Systems personnel have worked side-by-side with Navy Sailors and civilians for nearly 40 years to strengthen and modernize the fleet of Aegis-equipped surface ships," said Mark Keeler, vice president and general manager of BAE's Integrated Defense Solutions business. "Our team brings a wealth of Aegis combat system expertise with the agility, innovation and technical acumen to ensure the U.S. Navy has the safe and effective combat capability it needs to meet mission objectives."

As part of the Aegis Technical Representative Engineering Support Services contract, BAE will provide Navy acquisition managers with on-site leadership and systems engineering to validate Total Ship Combat design at Navy sites in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, Bath, Maine, and Pascagoula, Mississippi.

The company also will support systems engineering and test and evaluation personnel to provide fleet experience and operational insight. Additionally, the company will provide logistics, cybersecurity, production, acquisition and waterfront support required for upgrading and maintaining development of Aegis combat system capabilities and baselines across the entire life cycle.

Navy to Christen Littoral Combat Ship Cooperstown

Then-Navy Secretary Ray Mabus delivers remarks at the National Baseball Hall of Fame's induction weekend in July 2015, announcing the name of the Freedom-class littoral combat ship LCS 23 as USS Cooperstown. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Armando Gonzales

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy will christen its newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship (LCS), the future USS Cooperstown (LCS 23), during a 10 a.m. CDT ceremony on Feb. 29 in Marinette, Wisconsin, the Pentagon said in a release.

Alba Tull will serve as the ship's sponsor. In a time-honored Navy tradition, she will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow. Jane Forbes Clark, chairman of the board of directors of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York, will deliver the ceremony's keynote address.

"The christening of the future USS Cooperstown marks an important step toward this great ship's entry into the fleet," acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said. "The dedication and skilled work of everyone involved in the building of this ship has ensured that it will represent the great city of Cooperstown and serve our Navy and Marine Corps team for decades to come."

LCS 23 is the 12th Freedom-variant LCS, the 23rd in the class. The Cooperstown is the first ship named in honor of the city. LCS 23 received its name on July 25, 2015, during a ceremony at the Hall of Fame and it honors the veterans who are members of the Hall of Fame. These 64 men served in

conflicts ranging from the Civil War through the Korean War.

LCS is a modular and reconfigurable ship, designed to meet validated fleet requirements for surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures missions in the littoral region. Using an open architecture design, modular weapons, sensor systems and a variety of manned and unmanned vehicles to gain, sustain and exploit littoral maritime supremacy, LCS provides the U.S. joint force access to critical areas in multiple theaters.

The LCS class consists of two variants, the Freedom variant and the Independence variant, designed and built by two industry teams. The Freedom-variant team is led by Lockheed Martin in Marinette (for the odd-numbered hulls). The Independence-variant team is led by Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama, (for LCS 6 and the subsequent even-numbered hulls).