USS Portland Tests Laser Weapon

The amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland successfully tests a Solid State Laser – Technology Maturation Laser Weapon System Demonstrator (LWSD) Mark 2 MOD 0 on May 21. U.S. Navy PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – Amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland disabled an unmanned aerial vehicle with a Solid State Laser-Technology Maturation Laser Weapon System Demonstrator (LWSD) Mk 2 Mod 0 on May 16, the U.S. Pacific Fleet said in a release.

LWSD is a high-energy laser weapon system demonstrator developed by the Office of Naval Research and installed on the Portland for an at-sea demonstration. LWSD's operational employment on a Pacific Fleet ship is the first system-level implementation of a high-energy class solid-state laser. The laser system was developed by Northrup Grumman, with full system and ship integration and testing led by NSWC Dahlgren and Port Hueneme.

"By conducting advanced at-sea tests against UAVs and small craft, we will gain valuable information on the capabilities of the Solid-State Laser Weapons System Demonstrator against potential threats," said Capt. Karrey Sanders, commanding officer of the USS Portland.

The U.S. Navy has been developing directed-energy weapons (DEWs), to include lasers, since the 1960s. DEWs are defined as electromagnetic systems capable of converting chemical or electrical energy to radiated energy and focusing it on a target, resulting in physical damage that degrades, neutralizes, defeats, or destroys an adversary.

Navy ships face an increasing number of threats in conducting their missions, including UAVs, armed small boats and adversary intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems. The Navy's development of DEWs like the LWSD, provide immediate warfighter benefits and provide the commander increased decision space and response options.

"The Solid-State Laser Weapons System Demonstrator is a unique capability the Portland gets to test and operate for the Navy, while paving the way for future weapons systems," Sanders said. "With this new advanced capability, we are redefining war at sea for the Navy."

USS Oakland Completes Acceptance Trials

MOBILE, Ala. – The future USS Oakland successfully concluded acceptance trials on May 22 following a series of in-port and underway demonstrations in the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. Navy's Program Executive Office-Unmanned and Small Combatants said in a release.

During trials, the final milestone prior to the ship's delivery, the Navy conducts comprehensive tests of systems, including those essential to a ship's performance at sea such as the main propulsion, auxiliaries and electrical systems.

The ship also performed critical capability tests, including a full-power demonstration, steering and quick reversal, anchor drop test and combat system detect-to-engage sequence.

See: USS Kansas City Arrives at San Diego Homeport Before Commissioning

“I am impressed with the positive results achieved by the Navy and industry team during this acceptance trial of the future USS Oakland,” said Littoral Combat Ship Program Manager Capt. Mike Taylor. “We continue to see improvements in this class as we work to provide cost-effective warfighting capability to the fleet and the nation.”

Following delivery and commissioning, USS Oakland will sail to California to be homeported in San Diego with sister ships USS Independence, USS Coronado, USS Jackson, USS Montgomery, USS Gabrielle Giffords, USS Omaha, USS Manchester, USS Tulsa, USS Charleston, USS Cincinnati and USS Kansas City.

Four additional Independence-variant ships are under construction at Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. The future USS Mobile is undergoing final assembly. The modules for the future USS Savannah and future USS Canberra also are being erected, and modules for the future USS Santa Barbara are being fabricated. Additionally, Austal USA is preparing for construction of the future USS Augusta, USS Kingsville and USS Pierre.

Littoral combat ships are highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable designed to support mine countermeasures, anti-submarine and surface warfare missions. The Independence-variant LCS integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission capability from deep water to the littorals.

LCS is now the second-largest Navy surface ship class in production. In 2019, three LCSs were delivered to the fleet and five will be delivered in 2020 at a pace not seen since the 1990s.

Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba Returns Home after $60 Million Drug Bust

A helicopter interdiction tactical squadron with the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba pursues a drug-smuggling vessel in the Caribbean Sea in April. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Trees

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba returned home to Boston on May 23 following a 62-day patrol in support of Operation Martillo in the western Caribbean, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

Escanaba's crew seized nearly 2,000 kilograms of cocaine, valued at $60 million, while working with an armed helicopter interdiction tactical squadron onboard and local Panamanian law enforcement.

Escanaba's crew also located a disabled boat 100 miles north of Colombia in 14-foot seas and 35 mph winds. The crew launched its small boat team and rescued the four crew members stranded aboard the boat. Escanaba's crew transferred the survivors to the Colombian navy.

"I am extremely proud of the crew for their extraordinary dedication and professionalism throughout this patrol during an unprecedented time," said Cmdr. Mike Nalli, commanding officer of the Escanaba. "We overcame numerous challenges to focus on mission execution and achieve excellent results in support of [U.S. Southern Command's] national objectives."

Operation Martillo is a multinational detection, monitoring and interdiction operation that consists of 20 participating nations working together to counter transnational organized crime networks and illicit trafficking in the waters along

Central America.

Escanaba is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a crew complement of 100. They conduct maritime enforcement and homeland security missions in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

USS Kansas City Arrives at San Diego Homeport Before Commissioning

The Navy's newest littoral combat ship, the USS Kansas City, arrives at its new homeport at Naval Base San Diego. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kevin C. Leitner
NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO – The next ship to be commissioned and carry the Kansas City name arrived at its homeport in San Diego on May 24, the commander of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1 said in a release.

The future USS Kansas City arrived for the first time at Naval Base San Diego, where the U.S. Navy will commission the Independence-variant littoral combat ship on June 20.

See: USS Oakland Completes Acceptance Trials

"I am extremely proud of all the hard work the crew has done to complete the sail around and prepare us to officially join the fleet on commissioning day," said Cmdr. RJ Zamberlan, Kansas City's commanding officer. "We are honored and excited to represent the Navy, the nation and our namesake as well as to fulfill the ship's motto, 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall.'"

Kansas City will be homeported in San Diego with sister ships USS Independence, USS Coronado, USS Jackson, USS Montgomery, USS Gabrielle Giffords, USS Omaha, USS Manchester, USS Tulsa, USS Charleston and USS Cincinnati.

“The arrival of the Kansas City here today is exciting and the crew has worked incredibly hard to get to this point,” said Capt. Matthew McGonigle, commodore of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. “We look forward to ‘bringing the ship to life’ next month on the day of commissioning.”

Kansas City was built in Mobile, Alabama, by Austal USA in conjunction with General Dynamics. Prior to departing Mobile for San Diego, Kansas City’s crew conducted a 21-day restriction in movement in accordance with U.S. Navy pre-deployment guidelines because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kansas City is the 21st LCS to be delivered to the Navy, and the 11th of the Independence-variant to join the fleet. The KC is the second ship to be named for the largest city in Missouri. The name was assigned to a heavy cruiser during World War II. However, construction was canceled after one month due to the end of the war.

The name Kansas City was also assigned to the Wichita-class replenishment oiler AOR 3 in 1967. This ship saw service during the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm and was decommissioned in 1994.

USS Pinckney Takes Down Drug

Vessel, Seizes Over $28 Million of Cocaine

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Pinckney (DDG 91) with embarked U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) team conducts enhanced counter narcotics operations May 14. U.S. COAST GUARD

EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN (NNS) – The Arleigh Burke-Class Destroyer USS Pinckney (DDG 91) with embarked U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) team seized more than 3,000 pounds of cocaine May 14, the U.S. 4h Fleet/U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command said in a May 21 release.

A U.S. Navy maritime patrol aircraft assigned to the "Tridents" of Patrol Squadron 26 first spotted the low-profile vessel (LPV). Pinckney, with its embarked helicopters assigned to the "Wolf Pack" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 75 and the embarked LEDET, moved into position to intercept the LPV.

Pinckney and the embarked LEDET recovered a total of 70 bales of cocaine totaling an estimated 1,400 kilograms, worth over $28 million wholesale value.

"This was truly a team effort," said Cmdr. Andrew Roy, USS Pinckney commanding officer. "The air support we received was first class. We were able to safely and successfully conduct this operation due to the outstanding professionalism of the Navy – Coast Guard team."

USS Pinckney is deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations conducting U.S Southern Command and Joint Interagency Task Force South's enhanced counter drug operations missions in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific.

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

narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs in support of Presidential National Security Objectives.

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.

Navy Issues Request for Proposals for Medium Unmanned Underwater Vehicle

A Knifefish medium-class unmanned undersea vehicle training model undergoes crane operations aboard the Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1) in July 2019. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Anderson W. Branch

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy released a request for proposals for the design, development, test and production of the Medium Unmanned Underwater Vehicle (MUUV) May 21, the Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) said in a May 22 release. The solicitation will support the next generation of the PEO USC's Unmanned Maritime Systems Program Office's Razorback Unmanned Underwater Vehicle and the Naval Sea Systems Command Expeditionary Missions Program Office's Maritime Expeditionary Mine Countermeasures UUV (MEMUUV) system.

The MUUV will be a modular, open-systems and open-architecture UUV. In the Razorback Torpedo Tube Launch & Recovery (TTL&R) configuration, it will provide submarine-based autonomous oceanographic sensing and data collection in support of intelligence preparation of the operational environment. In the MEMUUV configuration, it will provide persistent surface-launched-and-recovered mine countermeasures.

The notional MUUV will contain a common baseline vehicle architecture, including sensors and components, for the submarine and expeditionary configurations. Launch-and-recovery systems will reflect each configuration's unique requirements and missions.

The MEMUUV is designed for launch from Navy and Marine Corps surface vessels, vessels of opportunity or land-based forward operating bases. The Razorback derives from the Navy's submarine-launched Littoral Battlespace Sensing Autonomous Undersea Vehicle (Submarine) effort which has two deployment configurations: Dry Deck Shelter and TTL&R. Only TTL&R variants are included in the current solicitation.

Northrop Grumman Builds Very Lightweight Torpedo for U.S. Navy

Northrop Grumman's Very Lightweight Torpedo (VLWT). Northrop Grumman

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Northrop Grumman has manufactured and tested the first industry-built Very Lightweight Torpedo (VLWT) for the U.S. Navy, the company said in an article posted May 21 on

its website.

The prototype torpedo is based on the Pennsylvania State University Applied Research Laboratory's (PSU-ARL) design that was distributed to defense industrial manufacturers in 2016. Northrop Grumman, which funded the research and development, will offer the design-for-affordability improvements to this VLWT as Northrop Grumman's response for the Navy's Compact Rapid Attack Weapon program.

Northrop Grumman is the only company in full-rate production of Mk54 and Mk48 torpedo nose arrays and has delivered over 600 Mk54 arrays and over 70 Mk48 arrays to the U.S. Navy.

Applying its engineering and manufacturing expertise, Northrop Grumman improved upon the VLWT baseline design to replace high-cost components and drive overall affordability, reproducibility and reliability. Those altered sections were built and tested using PSU-ARL's own test equipment for confidence.

"The successful testing of the torpedo nose on the first try is a testament to Northrop Grumman's design-for-affordability approach, which will significantly reduce cost without sacrificing operational performance," said David Portner, lead torpedo program manager, undersea systems, Northrop Grumman.

Northrop Grumman assembled the prototype VLWT using a Stored Chemical Energy Propulsion System manufactured by teammate Barber-Nichols Inc. of Denver, Colorado.

Northrop Grumman's torpedo design and production legacy reaches back over 80 years to World War II through its Westinghouse acquisition. In 1943, Westinghouse won the Navy contract to reverse engineer a captured German electric torpedo and in 12 months began producing the Mk18 electric torpedo, which turned the tide of the undersea warfare in the Pacific. Northrop Grumman has been at the forefront of torpedo design and production ever since, to include the current MK48

Common Broadband Advanced Sonar System (CBASS) heavyweight torpedo and MK50 Lightweight Torpedo.

“The nation needs advanced undersea warfare capabilities now more than ever,” said Alan Lytle, vice president, undersea systems, Northrop Grumman. “We are ready to support fielding the VLWT which will increase subsea lethality and enable innovative concepts of operations for multiple warfighting platforms.”

Northrop Grumman’s manufacturing plan would span the country by building components in California, Utah, Minnesota, Colorado, West Virginia and Maryland.

Cutter Active Offloads $37 Million Worth of Cocaine

Members of the Coast Guard Cutter Active crew offload more than 2,000 pounds of cocaine, worth about $37 million, seized in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean in May. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Gray

SAN DIEGO — The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Active offloaded more than 2,000 pounds of cocaine worth about $37 million on May 20 that was seized in early May from known drug-transit zones of the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard’s 11th Disrict said in a release.

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command began enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs in support of Presidential National Security Objectives.

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.

The fight against drug cartels in the eastern Pacific requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. attorneys in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the eastern Pacific 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.

“This patrol, and this interdiction in particular, highlights the resilience and professionalism of Active’s crew,” said Cmdr. James O’Mara, commanding officer of Active. “We cancelled a port visit, stretched logistics and diverted 500 miles to get on target and do our job. No captain could ask or expect more from a crew, especially given all the adversity overcome during this patrol. Though I know if more were required, this crew would rally and answer the call, the way they always do.”

Active is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter commissioned in 1966 and homeported in Port Angeles, Washington.

Coast Guard Academy Holds

Virtual Graduation Ceremony for Class of 2020

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz delivers remarks during the Coast Guard Academy virtual graduation ceremony.
NEW LONDON, Conn. – The U.S. Coast Guard Academy's Class of 2020 is the largest and most inclusive graduating class and includes the largest number of female graduates in the institution's history, the academy said in a May 21 release. They also became the first class to hold a virtual commencement ceremony due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commencement day activities began at 1 p.m. with recorded congratulatory messages from a host of flag officers, elected officials and celebrities, including TV weatherman and producer of the Coast Guard TV series Al Roker, as well as actors Gary Sinise and Kevin Costner, who referenced his portrayal of a Coast Guard swimmer in the film "The Guardian."

The five international students from the class were also sent congratulatory messages from officials representing their respective home countries of Haiti, Mexico, the Philippines and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The official ceremony consisted of a combination of live streamed footage from the official party on Cadet Memorial Field at the Academy, along with a mix of pre-recorded videos that closely followed the traditional run of past events. The event ended with recorded messages from the graduates to the rest of their classmates.

As the distinguished honor graduate of the Class of 2020, Ensign Alaric Stone gave an address that touched on the successes of his classmates despite the unprecedented circumstances they found themselves in and the bonds that hold

them together.

“It is a testament to our resilience in the face of adversity and our ability to take failure in our stride,” Stone said. “With 2020 vision we’ve been able to look beyond hardship and see what is truly important. Each other. Through trials and tribulations both big and small we have always remained a team. A family.”

In his remarks, Rear Adm. Bill Kelly, the Coast Guard Academy’s superintendent, reminded the audience of the inclusive nature of the class.

> *“With 2020 vision we’ve been able to look beyond hardship and see what is truly important. Each other. Through trials and tribulations both big and small we have always remained a team. A family.”*
>
> *Rear Adm. Bill Kelly, Coast Guard Academy superintendent*

“This year, we graduate the largest number of African-Americans, Native-Americans and Alaska natives and we continue to graduate more Hispanic officers than ever before,” Kelly said.

“The hard work to be more representative of the nation we serve is paying dividends, and while the demographic profile of this class is the most diverse ever, it’s the perspective, the skills and abilities each and every graduate brings to the service that makes them uniquely qualified to serve and lead during these unprecedented times.”

Standing on the stage alongside the official party at Cadet Memorial Field, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz made brief remarks before introducing a prerecorded message from U.S. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Milley told the graduates that, as leaders, they would be

counted on during difficult circumstances.

“Honor, respect and devotion to duty,” Milley said. “These words can’t be abstract to you. In our profession, you must develop a bond of trust like no other occupation in the world. You have to trust each other. You have to trust the chain of command. You have to trust the petty officers and the seamen, and they must trust you.”

In his recorded remarks, Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolfe welcomed the graduates into the U.S. Department of Homeland Security team and reminded them what it takes to serve in the current environment.

“As frustrating as it may be, the unorthodox situation in which we find ourselves today is emblematic of what you will all find when you are on the front lines defending this country, and that is the need to be prepared for the unexpected,” Wolfe said.

“Put simply, life is going to look a lot different out there than it did inside your classrooms at the academy, and that is why I expect you to always keep learning. It is the best way to prepare yourself for the challenges that lie ahead.”

Fairbanks Morse Engines to Power Coast Guard’s Third OPC

BELOIT, Wis. – Fairbanks Morse has been awarded a contract by Eastern Shipbuilding Group (ESG) to build and deliver the main propulsion diesel engines for the U.S. Coast Guard’s offshore patrol cutter, the USCGC Ingham, according to a Fairbanks Morse release.

The Ingham will be built by Eastern Shipbuilding in Panama City, Florida, and the engines will be constructed by Fairbanks Morse at its Beloit, Wisconsin, manufacturing facility.

“We are honored once again to be called on to provide the critical engines essential to OPC ships that will help to protect our shores during vital maritime security and border protection missions,” said George Whittier, Fairbanks Morse CEO.

“Our engines will help the offshore patrol cutters to continue patrolling freedom’s frontier for America’s mariners. FM is honored to contribute to OPC’s smooth and safe operation in some of the world’s most challenging environments. From sea state 5 to temperatures of -5F, FM products are ready for the challenge.”

The 360-foot-long cutter will be powered by two FM | MAN 16V 28/33D STC diesel engines, each rated at 7,280 kilowatts for 14,560 kilowatts of total propulsion power. The OPC will provide a capability bridge between the national security cutter, which patrols the open ocean, and the fast-response cutter, which serves closer to shore.

The design also includes the capability of carrying an MH-60R or MH-65 Helicopter and three operational over-the-horizon small boats.

Overall, the vessel is equipped with a highly sophisticated combat system and a C4ISR suite that will enhance capabilities to execute the cutter’s missions which range from drug interdiction to marine environmental protection.