

Navy Surface Forces, Army Attack Helicopters Conduct Ops in Arabian Gulf



AH-64 Apache helicopters operate with the expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller during a joint naval and air integration operation on March 27. U.S. Army/Spc. Cody Rich PERSIAN GULF – U.S. Navy expeditionary landing base ship USS Lewis B. Puller has been conducting joint naval and air integration operations with U.S. Army AH-64E Apache attack helicopters assigned to Army Central Command's Task Force Saber throughout March, according to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (USNAVCENT) public affairs.

The operations, which are designed to enhance the capabilities of U.S. forces to respond to surface threats, have involved Puller performing as a landing base platform for the Apaches, while Cyclone class Patrol Coastal ships select simulated

targets for them to engage. The guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Hamilton also participated in the joint operations.

“The integration of U.S. Army air weapons teams with other joint fires into the maritime environment greatly enhances our ability to expand reconnaissance and attack capability,” said Capt. Peter Mirisola, commander of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 50/Commander, Combined Task Force (CTF) 55. “The Apaches, in coordination with our surface ships, allow us to hold an adversary at high risk at extended ranges. Combined with other joint fires, these aircraft significantly increase the precision lethality of our joint maritime forces.”

Similar integration operations with Special Operations assets were conducted in the Arabian Gulf between U.S. naval forces and MH-6M Little Bird helicopters during Operation Earnest Will from 1987 to 1988.

More recently, USNAVCENT surface forces also conducted joint naval and air integration operations with AC-130W Stinger II gunships, assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command Central, on March 8 and March 9.

“Working with USARCENT forces represents another key capability in our ongoing integration of naval and air assets across our joint and coalition force to ensure maritime superiority,” said Vice Adm. Jim Malloy, commander of USNAVCENT/U.S. 5th Fleet. “This kind of cross-domain integration allows us to maintain highly lethal and effective defensive capabilities, regardless of what platforms are operating in theater.”

DESRON 50/CTF 55 conducts maritime security operations in support of regional security and stability. Its responsibilities include planning and executing a robust regional engagement program with coalition forces from regional partners and allied navies who operate and deploy to the Arabian Gulf.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait at the southern tip of Yemen.

New NOAA Program to Support, Expand Agency's Use of Unmanned Systems

SILVER SPRING, Md. – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is establishing a new Unmanned Systems Operations Program to support the rapidly expanding use of these systems across the agency, according to a NOAA release.

The new program will promote the safe, efficient and economical operation of unmanned systems (UxS) that NOAA uses to collect high-quality environmental data for the agency's science, products and services.

“Unmanned airborne and maritime systems are transforming how we conduct earth science at NOAA,” said retired Navy Rear Adm. Timothy Gallaudet, NOAA's deputy administrator. “Our new unmanned systems operations program will help us dramatically increase the application and use of these technologies in every NOAA mission area.”

Unmanned systems are sensor-equipped vehicles that operate autonomously or are remotely piloted. NOAA uses them for

seafloor and habitat mapping, ocean exploration, marine mammal and fishery stock assessments, emergency response and at-sea observations that improve forecasting of extreme events, such as harmful algal blooms and hypoxia.

While the use of UxS is not new to NOAA – agency scientists have been experimenting with and using unmanned systems for decades – the recent increase in the availability of highly capable UxS has brought a corresponding increase in their innovative use as a force multiplier for many NOAA programs. NOAA’s use of small unmanned aircraft for science missions has increased more than tenfold since 2012.

The Unmanned Systems Operations Program is being established within NOAA’s Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO), which operates, manages and maintains the agency’s fleet of ships and aircraft and oversees NOAA’s diving and small boat safety programs. Its services will include training, cybersecurity, acquisition and other expert support to ensure safe, cost-effective operations across the agency.

“With the creation of this new program, we will be better positioned to transition these technologies into operational platforms that will gather critical environmental data every American relies upon,” said Rear Adm. Michael J. Silah, director of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps and OMAO.

The new program will be housed at two locations. The NOAA Aircraft Operations Center in Lakeland, Florida, will continue to support the agency’s unmanned aircraft activities. A new facility being built by the Mississippi State Port Authority in partnership with the University of Southern Mississippi in Gulfport, Mississippi, will support unmanned maritime systems.

NOAA received \$12.7 million from Congress in fiscal year 2020 to improve and expand UxS operations across the agency, including the creation of the new program – a key goal of

NOAA's recently released Unmanned Systems Strategy. The program will also help meet the objectives of the Commercial Engagement Through Ocean Technology Act of 2018, which requires NOAA to coordinate research, assess and acquire unmanned marine systems with the U.S. Navy, other federal agencies, industry and academia.

NOAA is partnering with the Navy this year to evaluate new UxS technologies for ocean science applications through the Advanced Naval Technology Exercise (ANTX) program. Now in its fifth year, ANTX enables scientists and engineers to participate in the testing and assessment of experimental technologies that can support missions of both agencies. During the exercise, dozens of new systems are tested and demonstrated to help inform government and private sector investment decisions.

NOAA is also exploring the use of artificial intelligence in combination with UxS to collect and analyze large volumes of scientific data. NOAA recently released the NOAA Artificial Intelligence Strategy in conjunction with the Unmanned Systems Strategy.

Cutter Stratton Departs for Eastern Pacific Counter-Narcotic Patrol



The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton lines the rails of the flight deck as the cutter moors last November following a 162-day patrol in the western Pacific Ocean. The crew left again March 28 on a months-long deployment to

the eastern Pacific. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew S. Masaschi

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton got underway from Coast Guard Island on March 28 for a months-long deployment to the eastern Pacific Ocean, where the crew will patrol international waters off Central and South America to intercept and deter drug-trafficking efforts.

The cutter is currently conducting training and an at-sea health evaluation to ensure the crew is COVID-19-free and fully ready for operations.

“Times of crisis are when the nation counts on the U.S. Coast Guard and other military services to perform,” said Capt. Bob Little, Stratton’s commanding officer. “Cutter Stratton is capable of a wide range of homeland and national-security missions that are vital during a national emergency. Our crew understands the importance of sustaining these missions now, more than ever. It’s never easy to leave your families behind, and this deployment is no exception. Our families will be carrying a particularly large burden while we are away, but their resilience is at the center of our ability to provide maritime security for the nation.”

In fiscal year 2019, the Coast Guard conducted 236 separate drug events, detained 611 suspected smugglers and removed more than 458,000 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$6.1 billion.

One in five global drug-related deaths occur in the United States, and drugs have since 2000 cost the U.S. \$193 billion in crime, health, safety and lost productivity annually. The drug trade also funds cartels’ illegal activities in their home countries, spreading corruption and instability throughout the region.

The Stratton will be deployed in support of Campaign Martillo, The U.S.’s whole-of-government effort to combat drug

trafficking and transnational organized crime, which includes efforts of 16 U.S. agency partners, including the Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, DEA, HSI, and U.S. Attorneys in California, Florida and Puerto Rico, New York, Texas, Alabama and Ohio.

Campaign Martillo also includes the participation of 21 nations who work together to counter cartels and illicit trafficking traveling via air or waters of the Western Hemisphere.

The campaign is led by Joint Interagency Task Force South, a component of U.S. Southern Command, which oversees the detection and monitoring of illicit traffickers traveling via air and seas and supports U.S. and multi-national law enforcement agencies with interdictions.

The actual U.S.-led at-sea law enforcement boardings are conducted by trained Coast Guard members under the tactical control of the Coast Guard's 11th District, which is headquartered in Alameda.

"It is critically important the Coast Guard continues our lifesaving work during this national emergency," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, commander, Pacific Area.

"Our missions ensure the safety of Americans and the security of our maritime borders, and they enable the safe flow of commerce into U.S. ports. In this challenging COVID-19 environment, we have armed our members, like the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton, with the necessary training and equipment to prevent exposure to the virus, and we made sure their families back home are supported."

Raytheon, MDA Sign \$2 Billion Standard Missile-3 Contract

TUCSON, Ariz. – Raytheon Co. will produce and deliver SM-3 Block IB interceptors under a \$2.1 billion, multiyear U.S. Missile Defense Agency contract, the company said in a release. The deal is the first multiyear contract for the SM-3 program and covers fiscal years 2019–2023.

SM-3 is the only ballistic missile interceptor that can be launched on land and at sea. It is deployed worldwide and has achieved more than 30 exo-atmospheric intercepts against ballistic missile targets.

“This procurement deal is a win-win for government and industry,” said Mitch Stevison, Raytheon Strategic and Naval Systems’ vice president. “Efficiencies gained from this contract will allow us to reduce costs, continue to improve the SM-3 and deliver an important capability to our military.”

The Block IB variant achieved full-rate production in 2017. The company has delivered more than 400 SM-3 rounds over the lifetime of the program.

Marine Recruiting Command Transitions to Digital, Telephonic Prospecting

QUANTICO, Va. – Amid the national emergency caused by the

COVID-19 outbreak, Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is taking steps to protect recruiters and applicants, their families and their communities by limiting face-to-face interactions with the public, the command said in a release.

Effective immediately, MCRC will temporarily transition to prospecting entirely via digital and telephonic means, and Marine recruiters will no longer meet with new applicants in person.

“The preservation of our recruiting force, applicants, poolees and their families is the highest priority for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command during this national emergency,” said Maj. Gen. James W. Bierman, commanding general of MCRC. “With that in mind, we will immediately transition to prospecting exclusively via digital and telephonic means, and no longer initiate in-person interviews. We remain committed to recruiting the highly-qualified men and women our nation needs for its Marine Corps.”

“Because recruiting is an activity of vital importance to our nation and Corps, we will continue our efforts to ship young men and women to our recruit depots and officer candidate school as conditions permit,” Bierman said. “At the same time, it is recognized this imperative is not the only consideration. Our efforts will prioritize protecting our Marines and families.”

Local recruiting offices will continue to be staffed, but at reduced manpower levels commensurate with social distancing guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Leaders at every level have full discretion to carefully appraise the personal and geographic risk factors unique to each situation and then move to curtail or modify activities when necessary. Travel is limited to mission-essential requirements, and no more than two individuals will travel in

a vehicle.

Any member of the recruiting staff who has family members in a high-risk category as it pertains to COVID-19 will work remotely from their home.

Boeing Receives \$1.5 Billion P-8A Poseidon Contract from U.S. Navy



Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Michael Perna taxis and directs a P-8A Poseidon aircraft. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Juan Sua
ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Boeing a \$1.5 billion production contract for the next 18 P-8A Poseidon aircraft, the company announced in a release. The contract includes eight aircraft for the U.S. Navy, six aircraft for the Republic of Korea Navy and four aircraft for the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

The Republic of Korea Navy and Royal New Zealand Air Force acquired the aircraft through the foreign military sales process and will receive the same P-8A Poseidon variant designed and produced for the U.S. Navy. The Royal New Zealand Air Force is expected to begin receiving aircraft in 2022 and the Republic of Korea Navy is expected to begin receiving aircraft in 2023.

The P-8 is a long-range multimission maritime patrol aircraft capable of broad-area, maritime and littoral operations. A military derivative of the Boeing 737 next-generation

airplane, the P-8 combines superior performance and reliability with an advanced mission system that ensures maximum interoperability in the battle space.

The P-8 is militarized with maritime weapons, a modern open mission system architecture and commercial-like support for affordability. The aircraft is modified to include a bomb bay and pylons for weapons. It has two weapons stations on each wing and can carry 129 sonobuoys. The aircraft is also fitted with an in-flight refueling system.

With more than 254,000 flight hours to date, the P-8A Poseidon and P-8I variants patrol the globe performing anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, humanitarian and search-and-rescue missions.

Mitcham Delivers micro-MA-X System for Navy's Next-Gen Small UUV Evaluation

THE WOODLANDS, Texas – Mitcham Industries' Klein Marine Systems unit recently delivered the first micro-MA-X (μ MA-X System) in support of the U.S. Navy's next-generation small-class unmanned undersea vehicle (UUV) evaluation sponsored by the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), the company said in a release.

DIU is a defense organization focused exclusively on fielding and scaling commercial technology across the U.S. military to help solve critical problems.

The μ MA-X system is the first in a series of new imaging

products based on Klein's previously announced MA-X technology and designed for both commercial and military unmanned vehicle markets.

The reduced size and power requirements of the μ MA-X system make it an ideal payload for the rapidly growing UUV market. MA-X technology represents a high-quality, cost-effective nadir imaging solution that has long been sought by the industry. Traditional side scan sonar imaging creates a nadir gap directly under the path of the vehicle. The μ MA-X system fills that gap, when paired with conventional side scan, eliminating the need for additional time for overlapping survey lines to achieve 100% coverage. For UUVs, this translates into extended mission duration, or shorter time to cover the same area.

One of the key discriminators of the μ MA-X, particularly for the defense sector, is the ability to produce high-quality imagery of the nadir area that is comparable to the traditional side scan images. This allows for the data acquired by the system to be fed directly into existing automatic target recognition software allowing for automated detection and recognition of targets of interest.

"The μ MA-X system is the result of a fast-tracked, internally-funded development, and we are very excited to have the U.S. Navy evaluate its effectiveness for the Maritime Expeditionary Mine Countermeasures Unmanned Undersea Vehicle program," said Guy Malden, co-CEO of Mitcham.

Medical Center Seeks Marine

Corps Command's Help to Manufacture Ventilator Splitter



U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Ricler Magsayo calibrates a ventilator at Camp Kinser in Okinawa, Japan, on March 23. The University of California San Diego Medical Center has asked for Marine Corps Systems Command's help in making a ventilator splitter part via 3-D printing. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Terry Wong

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – The University of California San Diego Medical Center has requested Marine Corps Systems Command's (MCSC) assistance to help medical professionals as they deal with the evolving crisis of COVID-19, the command said in a release.

On March 16, Dr. Sidney Merritt, an anesthesiologist at UCSD Medical Center, contacted MCSC's Advanced Manufacturing Operations Cell and requested help in coordinating 3-D printer assets to design parts to enable the simultaneous ventilation of multiple patients.

AMOC sought collaboration with the Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific Reverse Engineering, Science and Technology for Obsolescence, Restoration and Evaluation Lab to rapidly design, print, test and evaluate prototype ventilator splitters using various materials.

The AMOC team also worked with the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery for support in evaluating, certifying and approving the parts prior to delivery to the medical center.

On March 18, Merritt provided design files for the ventilator splitter based on a successful test print conducted by the UCSD engineering team. UCSD requested assistance in printing

ventilator splitters in higher resolution and with diverse materials that could meet specific design requirements.

After receiving the design files, AMOC and the NIWC Pacific RESTORE lab printed several prototypes using different materials. In less than a day, AMOC used its industrial printer in Quantico, Virginia, and the RESTORE Lab employed its organic printers to produce initial prototypes.

The 3-D-printed ventilator splitters were scanned to ensure accuracy with the design files and then brought to UCSD Medical Center for fit testing and further design analysis.

AMOC's reputation in advanced manufacturing has grown since its establishment in 2019. The cell has demonstrated the ability to produce 3-D-printed parts and provide other sustainment and manufacturing solutions. When called upon, the AMOC can produce parts in a fraction of the time it takes traditional manufacturers.

"AMOC's response to this situation demonstrates how additive manufacturing can respond quickly to supply chain disruptions and rapidly prototype, evaluate and test new solutions to meet emerging urgent requirements," said Scott Adams, AMOC lead at Marine Corps Systems Command.

The rapid response by AMOC and the NIWC Pacific RESTORE lab to UCSD Medical Center's request for support indicates how the Department of the Navy is prepared to respond to the medical community during the COVID-19 crisis.

"I couldn't be prouder of the Marine Corps and NIWC Pacific team," said Carly Jackson, the chief technology officer at Naval Information Warfare Systems Command. "We are demonstrating the power, agility and speed of response that our Naval research and development centers bring to bear in times of national need."

Coast Guard Awards Eight Contracts for Industry OPC Studies

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard has awarded eight offshore patrol cutter (OPC) industry studies contracts, the service announced in a release. These awards support the Coast Guard's strategy to mitigate OPC program risk and establish a new, fair and open competitive environment to complete the OPC program of record.

Industry studies contracts were awarded to:

- Austal USA of Mobile, Alabama: \$2 million base award (\$3 million total potential value)
- Bath Iron Works of Bath, Maine: \$2 million base award (\$3 million total potential value)
- Bollinger Shipyards Lockport of Lockport, Louisiana: \$2 million base award (\$3 million potential value)
- Eastern Shipbuilding Group of Panama City, Florida: \$1.1 million base award (\$1.2 million potential value)
- Fincantieri Marinette Marine of Marinette, Wisconsin: \$2 million base award (\$3 million total potential value)
- Huntington Ingalls, Inc. of Pascagoula, Mississippi: \$2 million base award (\$3 million total potential value)
- Philly Shipyard of Philadelphia: \$2 million base award (\$3 million total potential value)
- VT Halter Marine of Pascagoula, Mississippi: \$2 million base award (\$2.9 million total potential value)

Under their respective contracts, the awardees will assess OPC design and technical data, provided by the Coast Guard, and the program's construction approach. Based on their analyses,

the awardees will recommend to the Coast Guard potential strategies and approaches for the follow-on detail design and construction (DD&C). The awardees will also discuss how they would prepare the OPC functional design for production. The awardees may also identify possible design or systems revisions that would be advantageous to the program if implemented, with strategies to ensure those revisions are properly managed.

The Coast Guard will use the industry studies results to further inform its follow-on acquisition strategy and promote a competitive environment for the DD&C award. Participation in industry studies is not a pre-requisite for submitting a DD&C proposal.

The OPCs will replace the service's aging medium-endurance cutters, which are becoming increasingly expensive to maintain and operate. The OPCs will bridge the capabilities of the national security cutters, which patrol the open ocean, and the fast response cutters, which serve closer to shore.

The current OPC DD&C contract is for up to four hulls. The contract was adjusted as part of a request made by the incumbent, Eastern Shipbuilding Group, for extraordinary relief. The request was a result of devastation caused when Hurricane Michael made landfall in Panama City, Florida, on Oct. 10, 2018. Hurricane Michael caused extensive damage to the ESG's shipyard and the Panama City region.

Hospital Ship Comfort Arrives

in New York City



The USNS Comfort leaves Naval Station Norfolk on March 28. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jonathan Clay

NORFOLK, Va. – The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort arrived in New York City on March 30 in support of the nation's COVID-19 response efforts, the U.S. 2nd Fleet announced.

While in New York, the ship will serve as a hospital for non-COVID-19 patients admitted to shore-based hospitals and will provide medical care to include general surgeries, critical care and ward care for adults, allowing local health professionals to focus on treating COVID-19 patients and for hospitals there to use their intensive care units and ventilators for those patients.

Comfort is a seagoing medical treatment facility that has more than 1,200 personnel embarked for the New York mission, including U.S. Navy medical and support staff assembled from 22 commands as well as over 70 civil mariners.

“The USNS Comfort arrives in New York City this morning with more than 1,100 medical personnel who are ready to provide safe, high-quality health care to non-COVID patients,” said Capt. Patrick Amersbach, commanding officer of the USNS Comfort Military Treatment Facility (MTF). “We are ready and grateful to serve the needs of our nation.”

Comfort's primary mission is to provide an afloat, mobile, acute surgical medical facility to the U.S. military that is flexible, capable and uniquely adaptable to support expeditionary warfare. Comfort's secondary mission is to provide hospital services to support U.S. disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.

“Like her sister ship, USNS Mercy, which recently moored in Los Angeles, this great ship will support civil authorities by increasing medical capacity and collaboration for medical assistance,” said Rear Adm. John Mustin, vice commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command. “Not treating COVID-19 patients ... but by acting as a relief valve for other urgent needs, freeing New York’s hospitals and medical professionals to focus on the pandemic.”

“This USNS Comfort team of Sailors, Marines and civilian mariners came together during the transit to New York City and our medical professionals are ready to begin receiving patients from local hospitals tomorrow,” said Capt. Joseph O’Brien, mission commander of Task Force New York City. “Our personnel are our strength – the men and women of our military services accomplish incredible things every day, and I am confident in their abilities as we start the next phase of this mission.”

The ship expects to begin receiving patients 24 hours after arriving in New York. All patient transfers will be coordinated with local hospitals, thus ensuring a consistent handoff of care between medical providers. Patients will not be accepted on a walk-on basis and should not come to the pier expecting to receive care.

“The last time that this great hospital ship was here was in the wake of 9/11, where she served as respite and comfort for our first responders working around the clock,” Mustin said. “Our message to New Yorkers – now your Navy has returned, and we are with you, committed in this fight.”