Littoral Combat Ship Successfully Launches Naval Strike Missile

USS Gabrielle Giffords launches a Naval Strike Missile on Oct. 1 during exercise Pacific Griffin. The NSM is a long-range, precision-strike weapon that is designed to find and destroy enemy ships. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Kenneth Rodriguez Santiago

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords successfully demonstrated the capabilities of the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) on Oct. 1 during Pacific Griffin, U.S. Pacific Fleet public affairs announced in a release.

Pacific Griffin is a biennial exercise conducted in the waters near Guam aimed at enhancing combined proficiency at sea while strengthening relationships between the U.S. and Republic of Singapore navies.

"Today was a terrific accomplishment for USS Gabrielle Giffords crew and the Navy's LCS class," said Cmdr. Matthew Lehmann, the ship's commanding officer. "I am very proud of all the teamwork that led to the successful launch of the NSM."

The NSM is a long-range, precision-strike weapon that can find and destroy enemy ships at distances up to 100 nautical miles. The stealthy missile flies at sea-skimming altitude, has terrain-following capability and uses an advanced seeker for precise targeting in challenging conditions.

Rear Adm. Joey Tynch, commander of Logistics Group Western Pacific, who oversees security cooperation for the U.S. Navy in Southeast Asia, said Gabrielle Giffords' deployment sent a

crystal-clear message of the continued U.S. commitment to maritime security in the region.

“LCS packs a punch and gives potential adversaries another reason to stay awake at night,” Tynch said. “We are stronger when we sail together with our friends and partners, and LCS is an important addition to the lineup.”

The NSM aboard Gabrielle Giffords is fully operational and remains lethal. The weapon was first demonstrated on littoral combat ship USS Coronado in 2014. It meets the Navy’s over-the-horizon requirements for survivability against high-end threats, demonstrated lethality, easy upgrades and long-range strike capability.

The Gabrielle Giffords deployment marks the first time that an NSM has sailed into the Indo-Pacific region.

Gabrielle Giffords, which is on its maiden deployment, arrived in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility on Sept. 16 for a rotational deployment to the Indo-Pacific region. This marks the first time two LCS have deployed to the Indo-Pacific region at the same time. Gabrielle Giffords is the fifth LCS to deploy to U.S. 7th Fleet, following USS Freedom, USS Fort Worth, USS Coronado and the currently deployed USS Montgomery.

Gabrielle Giffords will conduct operations, exercises and port visits throughout the region as well as work alongside allied and partner navies to provide maritime security and stability, key pillars of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

General Atomics Wins Contract for Supporting Hypersonic Glide Body Prototype Development

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS) has been awarded a contract by the U.S. Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office (RCCTO) to further the development of the Common Hypersonic Glide Body (CHGB) and Flight Test Vehicle in support of the U.S. Army Long Range Hypersonic Weapon and the U.S. Navy's Intermediate Range Conventional Prompt Strike Program, the company said in a release.

The contract award follows work performed by GA-EMS under a previous contract with the Army Space and Missile Defense Command for the Advanced Hypersonic Weapon technology demonstration program.

"As new threats continue to emerge, advancing the development and flight testing of hypersonic vehicle prototypes has become an urgent priority," said Scott Forney, president of GA-EMS.

"Over the past 13 years, we have worked closely with the Army and Sandia National Laboratories to design, manufacture and test hypersonic glide body components and technologies. We look forward to leveraging that expertise as this critical capability transitions out of the lab and into a production-ready asset to support the warfighter."

GA-EMS will provide manufacturing, production, engineering and technical support to integrate, test and evaluate CHGB and flight test vehicles through system and subsystem-level ground and flight test activities.

Deliverables include the manufacture of components, test and integration of vehicle flight components and assemblies, flight test planning and execution and simulation, validation and verification support.

HII Completes Dry Dock Work on George Washington

The final piece of the new main mast of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington is installed at Huntington Ingalls Industries Newport News Shipbuilding in March. With the dry dock portion of its refueling and complex overhaul complete, the ship is now in an outfitting berth, scheduled for delivery to the fleet in late 2021. Huntington Ingalls Industries/Matt Hildreth

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division has completed the dry dock portion of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington's refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH).

Following the recent flooding of more than 100 million gallons of water into the dry dock, George Washington was successfully moved to an outfitting berth, where it will begin final outfitting and testing. The overhaul is more than two-thirds complete and on track to be finished in late 2021.

"Getting George Washington out of the dry dock and back into the water is an important milestone in the overhaul process for shipbuilders, Sailors and our government partners," said Chris Miner, Newport News' vice president of in-service aircraft carrier programs.

"Over the next 24 months, we will focus on readying the ship

for the next 25 years of its operational life. Once our work is complete, George Washington will leave Newport News Shipbuilding as the world's most technologically advanced Nimitz-class warship."

During the dry dock phase of the RCOH, George Washington underwent significant upgrades and extensive repair work both inside and outside the ship. In addition to defueling and refueling its nuclear power plant, Newport News shipbuilders have re-preserved about 600 tanks and replaced thousands of valves, pumps and piping components.

On the outside, they performed major structural updates to the island, mast and antenna tower; upgraded all aircraft launch and recovery equipment; painted the ship's hull, including sea chests and freeboard; updated the propeller shafts; and installed refurbished propellers.

During the next phase of the complex engineering and construction project, shipbuilders will finish the overhaul and installation of the ship's major components and test its electronics, combat and propulsion systems before the carrier is redelivered to the Navy. This period also will be dedicated to improving the ship's living areas, including crew living spaces, galleys and mess decks.

"Taking the ship successfully out of the dry dock and over to our waterside pier marks a significant moment in the ship's history and in our RCOH period," said Capt. Kenneth A. Strong, the carrier's commanding officer.

"With the ship back in the water, we can turn our attention to our next major milestones and finishing our maintenance period to return this vital national asset back to the fleet."

USS George Washington arrived at Newport News in August 2017 and is the sixth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier to undergo its RCOH midlife refueling overhaul and maintenance availability.

Vigor Wins Modernization Contract for Two More Navy Cruisers

The guided-missile cruiser USS Cape St. George during a 2015 training exercise. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Susan C. Damman

SEATTLE, Wash. – Vigor has been awarded a $255 million contract for modernization of two Ticonderoga cruisers, USS Chosin and USS Cape St. George, according to a company release.

The contract includes options, which if exercised would bring the cumulative value of the deal to $303.6 million.

Work will include a combination of maintenance, modernization and repair. The modernizations will keep these ships combat effective to support fleet operations for years to come.

Work will be performed at Vigor's Harbor Island facility in Seattle, growing the ship repair workforce at the facility to approximately 650 employees.

"Ship repair and service life extension in the defense sector has been a growth area for Vigor's Pacific Northwest shipyards," said Adam Beck, Vigor's executive vice president of ship repair.

"This contract award allows us to maintain and build upon the quality, skilled workforce so necessary to maintain the mission readiness of the U.S. Naval Fleet. We are honored to have that opportunity and we are thrilled for the job growth

it represents.”

Other recent work for Vigor’s Navy program includes the USS Sampson, the USS Coronado and the USS Manchester. Work on the cruisers is expected to begin in December and be completed by November 2021.

Cutter Returns to Boston After Offloading More Than 12,000 Pounds of Cocaine

The Coast Guard Cutter Seneca crew offloaded more than 12,000 pounds of cocaine on Sept. 20 at Coast Guard Sector Miami. The drugs were interdicted in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan Lally

BOSTON – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seneca returned home to Boston on Sept. 27 after a 93-day patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

Seneca intercepted three drug smuggling vessels transporting cocaine from South America that were bound for the United States. The interdictions during this patrol resulted in the apprehension of nine suspected narcotics traffickers and more than 12,000 pounds of cocaine with a street value of nearly $174 million dollars.

“Counter-drug operations are a vital component to the Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security’s mission and our national security,” said Cmdr. John Christensen, commanding

officer of the Seneca. “I am exceptionally proud of this crew who, over the course of the last three months, rose above the challenges of conducting operations at sea, persevered through many personal sacrifices and showed an unwavering dedication to serving our nation.”

Throughout the patrol, Seneca rescued 22 Haitian Migrants, conducted joint exercises with the Honduran navy, transited the Panama Canal and spent several months combating illicit narcotics smuggling across the eastern Pacific with a deployed armed Coast Guard helicopter team from Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron Jacksonville.

These interdictions were in support of Operation Martillo, a regional initiative targeting illicit trafficking that threatens security and prosperity at the national, regional and international levels.

Coast Guard Commissions Newest Fast Response Cutter in Honolulu

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter William Hart sets the first watch during the cutter’s commissioning ceremony at Base Honolulu on Sept. 26. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew West

HONOLULU — The U.S. Coast Guard commissioned the newest Hawaii-based 154-foot fast response cutter (FRC) in Honolulu on Sept. 26, according to a Coast Guard 14th District release.

“There is no greater reflection of the commandant’s strategic

vision and commitment than the fact that as we commission the William Hart today, it will be the fifth Coast Guard cutter commissioned in the last two years here at Base Honolulu that will operate in the heart of Oceania," said Rear Adm. Kevin Lunday, commander of the 14th District.

"There is no question that by our actions and not our words alone, the Coast Guard is here and committed along with the rest of the United States in the Pacific."

The Coast Guard Cutter William Hart (WPC 1134) is the third Sentinel-Class FRC to be homeported at Coast Guard Base Honolulu. While these ships' crews call Honolulu home, they will operate throughout the 14th Coast Guard District, which covers more than 14 million square miles of land and sea, with units in Hawaii, American Samoa, Saipan, Guam, Singapore and Japan.

The FRCs are some of the newest Coast Guard vessels to come online, replacing the aging Island-Class patrol boat fleet. The FRCs represent the Coast Guard's commitment to modernizing service assets to address the increasingly complex global maritime transportation system.

Margaret Hart Davis, sponsor of the William Hart, brings the cutter to life with Lt. Cmdr. Laura Foster, the cutter's commanding officer, during the Sept. 26 ceremony. Davis is the daughter of William Hart, the ship's namesake. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew West

William Hart "is a remarkable ship with increased seakeeping, endurance, range, combat capability, telecommunications, everything about this is a game-changer for the Coast Guard," Lunday said.

FRCs feature advanced systems as well as over-the-horizon response boat deployment capability and improved habitability for the crew. The ships can accommodate a team of 24, reach speeds of 28 knots with a range of 2,500 nautical miles and

patrol up to five days.

Recently, FRCs already stationed in Honolulu participated in longer over-the-horizon voyages to the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Samoa, displaying the potential of these cutters and their importance to the Coast Guard’s overall Pacific strategy and regional partnerships.

The crew took delivery of the William Hart, which was built by Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, Louisiana, in Key West, Florida, and arrived in Honolulu on Aug. 17. Three more FRCs are scheduled to be homeported in Guam, increasing the 14th Coast Guard District’s total number of the cutters to six. Servicewide, the Coast Guard is acquiring 56 FRCs to replace the 110-foot Island-class patrol boats.

William C. Hart, the cutter’s namesake, was a Gold Lifesaving Medal recipient who rescued a crewmember of the tug Thomas Tracy.

In November 1926, Hart dove into the water in a 70-mph gale off Absecon, New Jersey, to save the mariner, who went overboard in the storm. Throughout the 1930s, Hart served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before returning to the Coast Guard in 1939, advancing to the rank of chief petty officer and serving as a boatswain’s mate.

When the United States entered World War II, he was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade and saw action in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. He served as commanding officer and executive officer for several ships before retiring from the Coast Guard as a lieutenant commander in 1950.

General Dynamics Enhances Littoral Combat Ship With New Anti-Ship and Land-Attack Cruise Missile System

FAIRFAX, Va. – General Dynamics Mission Systems has equipped the USS Gabrielle Giffords with new over-the-horizon missile capability in support of the Chief of Naval Operations' mandate to increase littoral combat ships' lethality and survivability, according to a Sept. 26 company release.

The integration of the Mk87 Mod 0 over-the-horizon Naval Strike Missile (NSM) aboard the USS Gabrielle Giffords, an Independence-variant LCS, strengthens the ship's mission readiness and defensive capabilities.

General Dynamics was able to integrate the NSM system by determining equipment placement, adapting the ship's navigation system to provide unique signals to the missile system, designing the operational station in the Integrated Command Center, designing the system for providing specialized power to the Mk87 and conducting all of the analyses necessary for a safe and effective system. The General Dynamics team, including Austal USA, designed structures and foundations and accomplished the installation in San Diego.

"The open-architecture design of the ship's computing environment and electronic systems made the design and integration of the new NSM system feasible in an accelerated timeline," said Carlo Zaffanella, vice president and general manager of maritime and strategic systems at General Dynamics Mission Systems.

The NSM, produced by Kongsberg and managed in the United

States by Raytheon, is a long-range, precision-strike weapon that can find and destroy enemy ships at distances up to 100 nautical miles.

In addition to the USS Gabrielle Giffords, General Dynamics will serve as the prime contractor for the integration and installation of the NSM capability on all Independence-variant LCSs already in service.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper Visits Newport News Shipbuilding

Defense Secretary Mark Esper during his visit to Huntington Ingalls Newport News Shipbuilding. Huntington Ingalls

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Defense Secretary Mark Esper visited Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division and the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, the company said in a Sept. 25 release. This was Esper's first visit to the shipyard since he was sworn in to lead the Pentagon in July.

Esper toured Ford to see the progress being made during the ship's post-shakedown availability and to learn more about its weapons-handling innovations and increased warfighting capabilities.

"Our shipbuilders play a vital role in building our Navy's future fleet," said Jennifer Boykin, president of Newport News Shipbuilding. "We appreciate that Secretary Esper took the time to visit our operations and Ford to see firsthand how we

are working with our Navy partners to redeliver the newest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that will be the centerpiece of our nation’s security strategy for decades to come.”

Navy’s Sea Hunter USV Showcased in Major Project Demonstration

Sea Hunter pulls into Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, last year. The unmanned ship was recently featured in a major demonstration using an advanced sensor. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Corwin M. Colbert

RESTON, Va. – Leidos’ unmanned ship, Sea Hunter, was recently featured in a major demonstration using an advanced sensor, the company said in a Sept. 19 release.

The new milestone comes less than a year after the ship voyaged from San Diego to Hawaii with no personnel on board. Including the return trip, this transit covered about 5,000 nautical miles.

The Office of Naval Research project was supported by the Naval Information Warfare Center-Pacific, Naval Undersea Warfare Center-Newport and Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory to explore how unmanned vehicles can be used as a naval force multiplier and allow warships to be available for other missions.

The exercise also showcased the open architecture and flexibility of Sea Hunter, which has hosted a variety of mission payloads, including airborne sensors.

“This exercise offered valuable lessons learned on how to take full advantage of a medium unmanned surface vehicle, with no personnel on board,” said Nevin Carr, Leidos Navy’s strategic account executive. “Autonomous vessels, especially when combined with artificial intelligence, have the potential to impact naval warfare in ways yet to be discovered.”

Naval Aviation Achieves Readiness Target, Shifts Focus to Sustainment

An F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. The Super Hornet has reached an 80% mission-capable rate, as has the EA-18G “Growler,” the commander of Naval Air Forces announced on Sept. 24. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Michael Singley

SAN DIEGO — The commander of Naval Air Forces announced on Sept. 24 that Naval Aviation has achieved its secretary of defense-mandated readiness target of an 80% mission-capable rate for both its operational F/A-18 E/F “Super Hornet” and EA-18G “Growler” fleets.

After a year of reforms across Navy squadrons, maintenance and supply depots and other key readiness-enabling commands, Super Hornet and Growler readiness each stand above 80% of primary mission aircraft inventory — 343 for Super Hornet and 95 for Growler, respectively.

Last year, with the Navy’s mission-capable rate hovering near 50%, then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis directed the Air

Force, Navy and Marine Corps to reach an 80% rate across their fighter and strike fighter aircraft squadrons.

To achieve this goal, the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) implemented the Naval Sustainment System-Aviation (NSS-A). The NSS-A initiative leverages best practices from commercial industry to update and improve aspects of Naval Aviation's maintenance practices in squadrons as well as at intermediate and depot fleet readiness centers.

Additional reform efforts greatly improved supply chain management, engineering practices, governance activities and safety. Initially, NSS-A focused on getting the Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet fleet healthy, but quickly grew to include the Navy's EA-18G Growler fleet due to the similarities in the two platforms. Ultimately, the Navy and Marine Corps will apply NSS-A reforms to recover and sustain readiness and improve safety for each type, model and series of aircraft.

According to Vice Adm. DeWolfe H. Miller III, the Navy's "Air Boss," after a decade of regularly maintaining between 250 and 260 mission-capable F/A-18s, the Navy is now sustaining more than 320 Super Hornets and surged to attain service goals of 341 mission-capable Super Hornet and 93 mission-capable Growler aircraft this month.

"This has been a year of results for Naval Aviation," Miller said. "I am incredibly proud of our Sailors, civilian teammates and industry partners. They developed and implemented the NSS and then drove readiness numbers that haven't been seen in over a decade. Their results are incredible and their passion for improvement is inspirational."

"The tremendous efforts of our fleet readiness centers were vital to achieving our readiness goals," said Vice Adm. Dean Peters, commander of Naval Air Systems Command. "I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of the Sailors and

artisans that keep us mission-focused.”

Rear Adm. Roy Kelley, commander of Naval Air Forces-Atlantic, pointed to the leading indicator of aviation readiness moving in the right direction: aviator flight hours.

“This is the first year in some time that we have executed our allocation of flight hours completely,” Kelley said. “That stands as a sign of health that we have a lot of ‘up’ aircraft, and that the parts are moving. We’re getting healthy, and we’re on the right track.”

Miller agreed, adding that achievement of the 80% goal was an important milestone, but not a completed mission.

“To be clear, there is no finish line to the NSS effort,” he added. “We don’t get to choose when we are called to fight. Sustainment is the key. Continuously improving the reforms implemented by our military, civilian and industry teams will be critical in maintaining our advantage in this age of great power competition.”