Vigor Lays Keel for Army's Next-Generation Landing Craft

An artist's rendering of the U.S. Army's next-generation landing craft, the MSV(L). Rendering courtesy of Vigor

VANCOUVER, Wash. – Representatives from the U.S. Army and federal and local elected officials joined Vigor employees for a keel laying ceremony on Sept. 16, celebrating the first milestone in the construction of the Army's next-generation landing craft, the Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) or MSV(L), according to a release from Vigor.

The nearly billion-dollar contract to build MSV(L) was awarded to Vigor in October 2017. The new design, developed in partnership with BMT, dramatically improves the capabilities of the current LCM-8 and provides the optimal combination of performance, operational flexibility and life-cycle cost while maintaining the reliability and versatility of the Army's current craft.

The MSV(L) prototype is named in honor of Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells, an Army watercraft operator killed in action in 1970 in Vietnam.

The event began with a welcome from Vigor CEO Frank Foti. Remarks were delivered by Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.), Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle, Timothy Goddette, U.S. Army Program Executive Office, Combat Support & Combat Service Support and Col. (P) Jered P. Helwig, the Armys chief of transportation. Helwig also gave the dedication honoring the service of Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells.

The ceremonial welds performed by Beutler and Helwig marked not only the start of the MSV(L) program but also the beginning of a new era in shipbuilding at Vigor's recently acquired state-of-the-art all aluminum fabrication facility in

Vancouver. Vigor expects the site to employ up to 400 workers by 2023 building high-performance military craft, workboats and aluminum fast ferries in addition to MSV(L).

Once the Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells is completed and testing and refinements have occurred, the schedule calls for four vessels in the low-rate production phase, followed by up to 32 vessels once full production is underway. Vigor's MSV(L) team consists of partners such as BMT, Gladding-Hearn and Northrop Grumman.

Naval Special Warfare Acquisition Corps Established

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy has established the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Unrestricted Line (URL) Officer Acquisition Corps (AC) and Major Program Manager (MPM) career path, the chief of naval personnel public affairs said in a release.

The NSW URL AC will professionalize an acquisitions career path for SEAL officers and build a cadre of leaders who can expertly develop, field and sustain capabilities needed for NSW's and the Navy's future operating environment, according to the release.

Experience, education and certification requirements for major acquisition command selection result in career patterns different from URL officers who serve exclusively in their primary warfare specialty. The most significant difference is the need for NSW URL AC designated officers to serve in acquisition-related billets before and after completing NSW O-5 command or NSW O-5 acquisition milestone assignments.

SEAL officers selected for NSW URL AC will receive designation as NSW AC eligible via an additional qualification designator.

NSW AC eligible candidates can compete for Major Program Management (MPM) and sequential major acquisition command slating after a minimum of 48 months of experience in acquisition-coded or related billets. Officers who accept orders to NSW O-5 acquisition milestone assignments will not be eligible to compete for URL major operational command.

The first NSW O-5 acquisition milestone board is slated to occur concurrently with the NSW commanding officer/executive officer administrative board in 2019.

Navy Pushing to Sustain Lethal Capacity with New DASN Office

PENTAGON – The Navy has created a new leadership position – deputy assistant secretary of sustainment – in its work to sustain and grow lethal capacity and move faster to respond to the growing size of the fleet.

"Building a workforce aligned to mission is critical to competing and winning," James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, announced on Sept. 13. "Establishing a deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for sustainment [DASN-S] to develop, monitor and implement policy and guidance throughout the Navy will enable us to better plan, program, budget and execute the Navy's sustainment mission."

Geurts added, “Sustainment is as critical as new construction to ensure the Navy is ready to deploy. This position will allow us to improve and align the complex drivers of maintenance and modernization completion – that in turn will increase our output to the fleet. We have to get better, and this will help.”

The new DASN-S position will report directly to Geurts and have oversight of sustainment funding across the Department of the Navy, which will be important to meeting Defense Department readiness goals. Additionally, DASN-S will oversee and manage Navy and U.S. Marine Corps sustainment and life-cycle management policies.

Additionally, to improve maintenance flow, the Navy is taking other steps. For surface ship maintenance availabilities conducted at private shipyards, the sea service is adjusting its contracting strategies to group multiple surface ships into one contract. This will provide workload stability for the private shipyards.

The Navy is also executing a “perform to plan” initiative that identifies performance gaps and barriers to execution so they can be addressed to improve performance. For submarine and aircraft carrier maintenance, that are generally done at one of the four shipyards, the Navy is executing a 20-year shipyard infrastructure optimization plan that coordinates required dry dock maintenance and modernization, optimizing workflow and replacing outmoded capital equipment.

“Across the board, we need to improve how we execute ship maintenance, whether it’s done in a public or private shipyard,” said Vice Adm. Tom Moore, commander of Naval Sea Systems Command. “We need to work with our industrial partners to provide workload stability and, for the Naval shipyards, we need to provide our 21st-century workforce with 21st-century facilities and equipment.”

“To win in an era of great power competition, we need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our public and private shipyards so we can deliver combat-ready ships to our Sailors and Marines,” Geurts added.

Marine Corps Sets New Milestone with GA-ASI MQ-9A Reaper UAV

SAN DIEGO – Over the last year, the U.S. Marine Corps’ Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 (VMU-1) blazed a trail of firsts and was awarded the 2018 Marine Corps Aviation Association Unmanned Aircraft Squadron of the Year.

A major component of the squadron’s accomplishments included use of the MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aircraft system (UAS), which to date has more than 4,800 flight hours of direct support reconnaissance over a 12-month period, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI) said in a release.

The multi-sensor reconnaissance equipped MQ-9A UAS produced by GA-ASI has provided crucial support to the Corps’ forward operations on the battlefield as well as serving as a proof of concept for the Deputy Commandant’s Marine Aviation Plan. Building the Corps’ Group 5 UAS community, this initiative will help inform the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) UAS Expeditionary (MUX) program while also meeting the 38th Commandant’s planning guidance to expand unmanned capabilities.

VMU-1 utilized leased MQ-9A Reaper aircraft to fulfill a request for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

(ISR) in Afghanistan since September 2018.

“We congratulate the officers and Marines of VMU-1 for their superb performance this year, winning the John I. Hudson Award as the Marine Unmanned Aircraft Squadron of the Year,” said David R Alexander, president, GA-ASI.

“GA-ASI looks forward to working with VMU-1 as the USMC transitions its Company Owned/Company Operated (COCO) MQ-9A contract to a Government Owned/Government Operated (GOGO) contract in the coming year.”

The GOGO capability fulfills the commandant’s directive for Marine Corps Group 5 persistent ISR capability with strike and will achieve IOC in 2020. VMU-1 will be the test bed and incubator to provide crucial information, lessons learned, requirements and tactics, techniques, and procedures that will aid in Marine efforts for a successful acquisition and fielding of MUX.

General Atomics Awarded Contract for Columbia Submarine Bearing Support Structures

SAN DIEGO – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS) has been awarded a contract from Naval Surface Warfare Center, Carderock Division (NSWCCD), to fabricate and deliver two large bearing support structures for Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines, the company said in a release.

“This contract leverages our extensive manufacturing competencies to ensure these critical structures are delivered to NSWCCD as the first new Columbia-class submarine begins construction in October 2020,” said Scott Forney, president of GA-EMS.

GA-EMS will manufacture the two bearing support structures at their facilities in Tupelo, Mississippi. The Navy intends to build 12 Columbia-class submarines over the next 20 years.

L3Harris Delivers AAV Capability to U.K.’s Defence Science and Technology Lab

PORTCHESTER, U.K. – L3Harris Technologies has delivered a brand-new class of Autonomous Surface Vehicle (ASV) with advanced capabilities to enable the United Kingdom’s Royal Navy to understand how to maintain a technical advantage over potential adversaries, the company said in a release.

The Maritime Autonomy Surface Testbed (MAST) 13 is a 13-meter (41-foot) high-speed system capable of fully autonomous navigation. The ASV uses L3Harris’ ASView autonomous control system and advanced algorithms developed for the United Kingdom’s Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

Designed, built and commissioned by L3Harris’ Unmanned Maritime Systems team based on the south coast of the United Kingdom, MAST 13 was officially launched on Sept. 11 at DSEI in London. The system carried out unmanned surveillance and force protection in the Victoria Dock at DSEI.

“MAST 13 reflects the increased use of unmanned systems in the military domain. This vehicle serves as a test platform to support new concepts for the Royal Navy, allowing them to exploit unmanned systems and maintain a technical advantage,” said Alasdair Gilchrist, Above Water Systems program manager at the lab.

Since 2014, L3Harris and Dstl have collaborated to develop ASVs that support new concepts for the Royal Navy and act as a testbed for innovative technologies.

“As the program continues, we welcome collaboration with other organizations to test new algorithms, sensors, payloads and novel concepts. We encourage any such organizations to get in touch,” Gilchrist said.

Predecessor MAST systems developed by L3Harris and Dstl have carried out numerous high-profile operations, including the Royal Navy’s Unmanned Warrior in 2016 and the Australian Defence Showcase, Autonomous Warrior in 2018. MAST 9 is in Portugal for the NATO exercise REPMUS. The high-speed vessel is operating autonomously, beyond line-of-sight, to carry out reconnaissance, interdiction and patrol tasks.

Coast Guard Repatriates 46 Migrants to the Dominican Republic

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle (WPC-1133) repatriated 46 migrants on Sept. 10 to a Dominican Republic navy vessel just off Samaná following the interdiction of two illegal migrant voyages in the Mona

Passage, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Four of the interdicted migrants – three men and a woman – remain in Puerto Rico to face possible federal prosecution on charges of attempted illegal re-entry into the United States.

The interdictions resulted from ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group.

While on a routine patrol of the Mona Passage on Sept. 8, the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) detected and interdicted a 22-foot makeshift boat with 22 migrants aboard about eight nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Heriberto Hernandez's crew safely embarked 14 men and eight women who claimed to be Dominicans.

A Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations DHC-8 marine patrol aircraft crew sighted a second migrant boat on Sept. 8 about 56 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Heriberto Hernandez diverted to the scene and interdicted a 16-foot boat with 28 migrants aboard. The cutter's crew safely embarked 26 men and two women, all of whom also claimed to be Dominican.

The Heriberto Hernandez later rendezvoused with the cutter Joseph Doyle and transferred the 46 migrants for their repatriation. The Heriberto Hernandez also rendezvoused with Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, who received custody of the four migrants awaiting prosecution.

LAV Meets ARV: Researching the Marines' Next-Generation Light Armored Vehicle

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Office of Naval Research (ONR) is sponsoring research to develop the next-generation Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV), slated to replace the Marine Corps' current Light Armored Vehicle (LAV), the office's public affairs said in a release.

The LAV supports Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, which perform sustained reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance and security missions in all weather. It's been in service since the early 1980s, and the Marine Corps plans to start replacing it at the end of the next decade.

ONR's ARV effort is part of the Department of the Navy's Future Naval Capabilities program, which aims to discover, assess and fast-track the most mature and useful new technologies into acquisition programs of record once the research is complete.

The ARV will provide transformational sensor, communications and combat capabilities to collect and communicate information, while integrating robotics and artificial intelligence in manned-unmanned teams. Using ARV, a crew will be able to use advanced onboard sensors and unmanned systems to detect, recognize and identify threats at extended ranges.

Beginning in 2018, ONR awarded several contracts for full-system concept/trade studies and for individual advanced technology research efforts. This year, ONR has awarded contracts to two defense companies to design, fabricate and test full-scale technology-demonstration vehicles.

One vehicle, by General Dynamics Land Systems, will

incorporate advanced technologies available today or in the near future around a theoretical unit price. This is known as the “base-vehicle” approach.

The other vehicle, by SAIC, is conceived as an “at-the-edge” vehicle with advanced technologies that, while fully mature today, could be incorporated into the ARV as new capabilities when threats and missions evolve. The objective of this approach is to envision the most advanced technology, beyond current capabilities.

Both technology-demonstrator platforms should be ready for government evaluation near the end of 2020.

Additionally, ONR is investing in component technology development meant to enhance the armored reconnaissance mission of the future through investments in platform cybersecurity; logistics management; mobility; and autonomous aerial vehicles with Battelle, Cougaar Software, QinetiQ and SRI International, respectively.

To ensure full collaboration and a smooth transition of research products to the Marine Corps, close alignment is maintained with acquisition and requirements representatives from the Program Manager for Light Armored Vehicles within the Marine Corps Systems Command and the Ground Combat Element Division within the Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

Coast Guard to Open Polar Security Cutter Project

Office in Pascagoula

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard Acquisitions Program are scheduled to preside over a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sept. 11 in Pascagoula to formally open the service's Polar Security Cutter Project Resident Office, the Coast Guard's 8th District said in a release.

The Project Resident Office will be responsible for overseeing the construction of the new polar security cutter being built at VT Halter Marine Shipyard.

Timothy M. Newton is the commanding officer of the Polar Security Cutter Project Resident Office.

The new icebreaker will be the first of six planned icebreakers the Coast Guard needs to meet its missions in the high latitudes.

"Against the backdrop of great power competition, the polar security cutter is key to our nation's presence in the polar regions," Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said in a previously released statement.

Coast Guard Cutter Mellon Returns after 80-Day Patrol of Pacific Ocean

A boarding team aboard an over-the-horizon cutter boat from Coast Guard Cutter Mellon approaches a fishing vessel to conduct an at-sea boarding in the North Pacific Ocean on Aug.

13. U.S. Coast Guard
SEATTLE –
The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Mellon (WHEC 717), including two Canadian fishery officers, returned to their homeport of Seattle on Sept. 2 after an 80-day patrol detecting and deterring illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity in the Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

IUU fishing deprives the international economy of billions of dollars and undermines the livelihoods of legitimate fish harvesters around the world. It impacts food security, affecting millions of people, including many vulnerable coastal communities. Combatting global IUU fishing through international partnerships is a priority for Canada and the United States.

“IUU fishing is one of the greatest threats to the ocean’s fish stocks,” said Capt. Jonathan Musman, Mellon’s commanding officer. “It was an honor to be on the front lines of enforcement efforts of the distant waters fishing fleets.”

The fisheries patrol was performed under the auspices of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the North Pacific Fisheries Commission. During the patrol, Coast Guard and Canadian fishery officers boarded 45 vessels flagged in Japan, Russia, South Korea, China, Chinese Taipei

and Panama, and they encountered violations ranging from improper gear to intentionally fishing for sharks without a license. Boarding officers also found evidence of illegal shark finning. Altogether, boarding teams detected 68 potential violations.

“Canada is serious about ending illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing,” said Jonathan Wilkinson, minister of fisheries, oceans and the Canadian coast guard. “We are working with our U.S. partners to achieve this goal. By preventing fish and seafood products derived from IUU fishing from entering our ports, we will not only help level the playing field for Canadian harvesters and Canadian businesses involved in the fish and seafood trade: we are also sending a very strong message that Canada’s ports have zero tolerance for illegally caught fish.”

This is the second joint operation between the U.S. Coast Guard and Fisheries and Oceans, Canada’s Conservation and Protection program, this year. Along with the two fishery officers aboard the Mellon, Canada also provided fishery officers aboard a Dash-8 maritime surveillance aircraft, operated by PAL Aerospace. The aircrew performed multiple missions over the North Pacific and Bering Sea using state-of-the-art radars and maritime surveillance tools.

Canada shared the data from these flights with U.S. Coast Guard counterparts to support the Mellon’s patrol mission.

The ship also embarked two different helicopter crews from U.S. Coast Guard Air Station North Bend, who provided 63 flight hours that directly assisted with enforcement efforts.

Mellon’s crew members had several port calls in Yokosuka, Japan, near Tokyo, during the almost three-month long patrol, which covered nearly 19,000 nautical miles.

The USCG Mellon is a 378-foot high endurance cutter, one of two homeported in Seattle. The ship was built in 1966 and was designed to perform each of the Coast Guard’s missions, including search and rescue, national defense, law enforcement, and environmental protection.