

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.”

Navy Lays Keel of USS Savannah at Austal USA

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy held a keel-laying and authentication ceremony on Sept. 20 for the future littoral combat ship USS Savannah at Austal USA’s Mobile, Alabama, shipyard, according to a release from Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants.

The ship’s sponsor, Dianne Isakson, wife of Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), authenticated the keel for the 14th

Independence-variant LCS during the ceremony.

“We are honored to lay the keel of what will one day be a magnificent combat ship that will defend our great country as our Sailors operate her around the globe,” said Capt. Mike Taylor, LCS program manager.

While the keel laying traditionally represents the formal start of a ship’s construction, fabrication begins months in advance. However, keel laying continues to symbolically recognize the joining of the ship’s components and the ceremonial beginning of a vessel.

Four other Independence variant LCSs are undergoing construction at Austal USA with five additional ships in pre-production planning.

Coast Guard Cutter Interdicts Semi-Submersible in the Eastern Pacific



U.S. Coast Guard boarding team members climb aboard a suspected smuggling vessel. U.S. Coast Guard JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew intercepted a drug-laden semi-submersible in the eastern Pacific, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

While on routine patrol in the eastern Pacific, Valiant’s crew interdicted a self-propelled semi-submersible in international waters carrying about 12,000 pounds of cocaine, worth more than \$165 million, and apprehended four suspected drug

smugglers.

The semi-submersible was originally detected and monitored by maritime patrol aircraft, and the Valiant crew was diverted by Joint Interagency Task Force South to interdict the semi-submersible, arriving after sunset.

The Valiant crew launched two small boats with boarding teams made up of Valiant crew and two members of the Coast Guard Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team, successfully interdicting the semi-submersible in the early morning hours. They then led and conducted a full law enforcement boarding with the assistance of Colombian naval assets that arrived on scene shortly after.

About 1,100 pounds of cocaine were recovered and offloaded to the Valiant during the operations. The remaining cocaine on the semi-submersible could not be safely extracted due to stability concerns of the vessel.

According to Valiant's commanding officer, the interdiction coincided with a time-honored mariner's milestone and tradition of crossing the equator, which made both events even more meaningful part of the ship's patrol.

"There are no words to describe the feeling Valiant crew is experiencing right now," said Cmdr. Matthew Waldron, Valiant's commanding officer. "In a 24-hour period, the crew both crossed the equator and intercepted a drug-laden self-propelled semi-submersible vessel. Each in and of themselves is momentous events in any cutterman's career. Taken together, however, it is truly remarkably unprecedented. This interdiction was an all-hands-on-deck evolution, and each crew member performed above and beyond the call of duty."

Navy Tests Mine Countermeasures on USNS Hershel 'Woody' Williams



Capt. David Gray, the military detachment officer in charge of the Military Sealift Command expeditionary sea base USNS Hershel 'Woody' Williams, directs Sailors while leading training aboard an inflatable boat as the Hershel "Woody" Williams is anchored Sept. 15 in the Chesapeake Bay. U.S. Navy/Bill Mesta

NORFOLK, Va. – USNS Hershel "Woody" Williams (T-ESB 4) has finished a three-day voyage in the Chesapeake Bay to test an anti-mine system, the public affairs offices of the program executive officers for ships and unmanned and small combatants said in a release.

The expeditionary sea base (ESB) ship used the Littoral Combat Ship Mine Countermeasure (MCM) Mission Package portable control station to maneuver the MCM equipment and the launch and recovery equipment as well as to test the command and control of unmanned vehicles.

The demonstration proved ESB class ships' ability to serve as an MCM-capable platform to embark 12 20-foot equivalent units, vehicles and the support equipment required to operate, launch and recover one full MCM mission package, including the buried mine hunting and unmanned sweeping mission modules, with flexible ship modifications.

"Considering the contested environments [that] our ships sail in, counter-mine capabilities are very important because we have to be able to keep the enemy at bay," said Capt. David Gray, the Hershel "Woody" Williams' officer in charge.

"Mines of today are very inexpensive to

make,” Gray added. “Our adversaries can produce mines for a few hundred dollars and inflict a tremendous loss of life while causing millions of dollars of damage. So, we need the assets out there to detect and destroy these threats ahead of time and keep the world’s shipping lanes open.”

Representatives from Program Executive Office for Ships (PEO Ships) and Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) had overall responsibility for the planning and execution of the integration event, with support from the Naval Sea Systems Command’s Engineering Directorate, Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City and Carderock Combatant Craft Divisions, and Mine Countermeasures Detachment 22. Personnel from Military Sealift Command (MSC) and ship’s force conducted ship operations, navigation and maintenance of the ship systems during the demonstration.

“This demonstration highlighted the inherent modularity of the Mine Countermeasure Mission Package,” said Capt. Godfrey Weekes, Littoral Combat Ships Mission Modules Program Manager, PEO USC. “The ability to deploy the MCM capability from this ship is a true force multiplier.”

Initial assessments showed positive results and will help inform the feasibility of integration on ESB as well as other vessels of opportunity. This integration demonstration represents the potential to provide increased agility to our operational forces as they respond to the growing complexity of sea-mines while shifting to a broad-spectrum cross-domain, expeditionary approach.

With a large flight deck, as well as fuel and equipment storage, repair spaces, magazines and mission spaces, the ESB platform continues to demonstrate tremendous adaptability.

“This successful demonstration shows the versatility of the ESB platform to bring capability to the fleet through expanded

expeditionary warfare mission sets,” said Capt. Scot Searles, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, PEO Ships. “Our teams worked collaboratively to develop and implement innovative designs that expand our operational advantage and provides tremendous benefit to our warfighters.”

Coast Guard Cutter Seneca Offloads More than 12,000 Pounds of Cocaine in Miami



Seneca’s crew offloaded more than 12,000 pounds of cocaine on Sept. 20 at Coast Guard Sector Miami. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan Lally

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC-906) crew offloaded more than 12,000 pounds of cocaine Sept. 20 at Coast Guard Sector Miami, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The drugs were interdicted in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America, including contraband seized and recovered in more than five interdictions of suspected drug smuggling vessels by Coast Guard cutters:

The cutter Seneca was responsible for two cases, seizing about 2,800 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma (WMEC-908) was responsible for three interdictions, seizing about 2,500 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL-757) was responsible for two cases, seizing approximately 5,700 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Valiant (WMEC-621) was responsible for one case, seizing about 1,000 pounds of cocaine.

“These down-range counter-drug operations are a vital component to the Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security’s mission and our national security. These operations enable us to extend our maritime borders, weaken the economic engine of Transnational Criminal Organizations, contribute to enhancing stability and security across our partner nations within Central America, and they combat the drug epidemic within our local communities,” said Cmdr. John Christensen, commanding officer of the cutter Seneca.

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

The cutter Seneca’s crew along with those of the other ships conducted operations targeting transnational criminal organizations in conjunction with Joint Interagency Task Force-South, Department of Defense, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Justice, and several other Coast Guard aircraft. The cutter Seneca’s presence and efforts are critical to disrupting and dismantling the transnational criminal organizations that attempt to smuggle these drugs through the ocean and into Central and North America.

The cutter Seneca is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Boston. The cutter Tahoma is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Kittery, Maine. The cutter Midgett is a 418-foot national security cutter homeported in Honolulu. The cutter Valiant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Jacksonville, Florida.

Coast Guard Shifts Response Efforts in Bahamas

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MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard cutters and aircraft conducting urgent search-and-rescue operations in support of the Bahamas' response to Hurricane Dorian have been redeployed to their home stations, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

As the response efforts shift to long-term recovery, Coast Guard Incident Management Assistance Teams continue to work with the Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency, and Coast Guard crews and resources are available as needed.

To date, Coast Guard crews have completed the following in their response efforts in support of the Bahamas since the Hurricane Dorian response began:

- Rescued 407 people
- Received 1,388 search-and-rescue calls
- Conducted 136 aviation sorties
- Conducted 62 surface sorties

The Coast Guard supported the Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency and the Royal Bahamas Defense Force, who lead the search-and-rescue efforts.

Boeing MQ-25 Unmanned Aerial

Refueler Completes First Test Flight



Boeing and the U.S. Navy successfully completed the first test flight of the MQ-25 unmanned aerial refueler on Sept. 19. Boeing

ST. LOUIS – Boeing and the U.S. Navy on Sept. 19 successfully completed the first test flight of the MQ-25 unmanned aerial refueler, according to a company release.

The MQ-25 test asset, known as T1, completed the autonomous two-hour flight under the direction of Boeing test pilots operating from a ground control station at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, Illinois, where the test program is based. The aircraft completed an autonomous taxi and takeoff and then flew a pre-determined route to validate the aircraft's basic flight functions and operations with the ground control station.

“Seeing MQ-25 in the sky is a testament to our Boeing and Navy team working the technology, systems and processes that are helping get MQ-25 to the carrier,” Boeing MQ-25 Program Director Dave Bujold said. “This aircraft and its flight test program ensures we’re delivering the MQ-25 to the carrier fleet with the safety, reliability and capability the U.S. Navy needs to conduct its vital mission.”

The Boeing-owned test asset is a predecessor to the engineering development model (EDM) aircraft and is being used for early learning and discovery to meet the goals of the Navy's accelerated acquisition program. Boeing will produce four EDM MQ-25 air vehicles for the Navy under an \$805 million contract awarded in August 2018.

The MQ-25 will provide the Navy with a much-needed carrier-based unmanned aerial refueling capability. It will allow for

better use of the combat strike fighters currently performing the tanking role and will extend the range of the carrier air wing.

“Today’s flight is an exciting and significant milestone for our program and the Navy,” said Capt. Chad Reed, the Navy’s unmanned carrier aviation program manager. “The flight of this test asset two years before our first MQ-25 arrives represents the first big step in a series of early learning opportunities that are helping us progress toward delivery of a game-changing capability for the carrier air wing and strike group commanders.”

T1 received its experimental airworthiness certificate from the FAA in September, verifying that the air vehicle meets the agency’s requirements for safe flight. Testing will continue with T1 to further early learning and discovery that advances major systems and software development.