Littoral Combat Ship St. Louis Christened and Launched

MARINETTE, Wis. – The Lockheed Martin-led shipbuilding team launched littoral combat ship (LCS) 19, the future USS St. Louis, into the Menominee River at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard. Ship sponsor Barbara Broadhurst Taylor, the daughter of a decorated World War II aviator, christened LCS 19 just prior to launch.

“LCS 19 is the second ship we’ve christened and launched this year,” said Joe DePietro, Lockheed Martin vice president and general manager of Small Combatants and Ship Systems. “Our shipbuilding team has truly hit its stride. We completed trials on three ships and delivered two more. Once delivered to the Navy, LCS 19 will be on its way to independently completing targeted missions around the world. We remain focused on delivering these affordable ships to the fleet as quickly as possible and increasing capability with each hull.”

The Freedom-variant LCS integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future missions from deep water to the littorals. LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable ship, designed to support focused mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare and surface warfare missions. LCS 19 is targeted to support the mine countermeasures mission.

Lockheed Martin is in full-rate production and has delivered seven ships to the U.S. Navy. There are seven ships in various stages of production and test at Fincantieri Marinette Marine. This year, the Lockheed Martin-led team began construction on two ships, delivered two ships, completed sea trials for three ships and saw one delivered ship commissioned. LCS 13, the future USS Wichita, is slated for commissioning in Mayport, Florida, on Jan. 12.

“I am thrilled and very honored to be the sponsor of the future USS St. Louis. The combination of my family’s military background and the enduring spirit of the great city of St. Louis make this incredibly meaningful,” Taylor said. “This is the seventh ship to bear the name St. Louis, and I know that the people of our great city are extremely proud that this distinguished legacy will continue.”

“We are proud to be building LCS 19 and her sister ships at the heartland’s only naval shipyard,” said Jan Allman, Fincantieri Marinette Marine president and CEO. “Today’s launch and christening is a testament to the hard work of more than 2,000 workers who pass through the shipyard’s gates, put on their hard hats and build American warships.”

Riachuelo, the First Brazilian-Built Scorpène Submarine, Has Been Launched

ITAGUAI, Brazil – The Brazilian Navy launched its first Brazilian-built Scorpène submarine, Riachuelo, on Dec. 14, the Naval Group said in a release. The ceremony took place at the Itaguaí Navy base.

In 2009, Naval Group was entrusted by the Brazilian Navy with designing and transferring the technology for four conventional Scorpène submarines, and for the design and manufacturing assistance for the non-nuclear part of Brazil’s first nuclear-powered submarine. The contract also included the support for the construction of a naval base and a shipyard in Brazil.

The Prosub program is a key extension of the strategic defense cooperation agreement signed in December 2008 in Rio de Janeiro.

The launching of the Scorpène Riachuelo demonstrates the success of the program, with both the successful completion of the first submarine and of the shipyard's infrastructure. The latter is being built by a Brazilian company, Construtora Norberto Odebrecht (CNO), based on Naval Group specifications and on the French group's experience in the design, production engineering and in-service support of submarines.

The Riachuelo will start sea trials in 2019 for delivery in 2020. Delivery of submarines two, three and four will then follow every 12 to 18 months.

Since 2012, Naval Group has done considerable work to identify, select, negotiate, qualify Brazilian service providers in order to feed the supplier database for equipment or products supplied by Naval Group to the Brazilian Navy, and present and qualify local suppliers for the future needs of the Brazilian Navy.

This work enables the Brazilian Navy to rely more and more on a sovereign national industrial base.

It also enables the Brazilian industrial ecosystem to access new markets by promoting their "Naval Group" and "Brazilian Navy" accreditation and to avail of the know-how and experience of the French group in the fields of project management.

Finally, ICN (Itaguaí Construções Navais) will be able to call on this panel of suppliers for its own development as part of the future maintenance and support services of the submarines.

Today, 14 Scorpène submarines are in operational service or being built, for the Chilean Navy (two units), the Malaysian Navy (two units), the Indian Navy (six units) and the

Brazilian Navy (four units).

Comfort Returning to Norfolk After Completing Mission in South and Central America

NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort is scheduled to return to Naval Station Norfolk Dec. 18, after completing a deployment to South and Central America, Military Sealift Command announced in a Dec. 14 release.

Returning to Norfolk signifies the conclusion of Comfort's 11-week medical support mission to the region as part of U.S. Southern Command's Operation Enduring Promise initiative.

Comfort's embarked medical team worked with health and government partners in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Honduras, providing care both aboard the ship and at land-based medical sites, helping to relieve pressure on national medical systems caused partially by an increase in cross-border migrants. The deployment reflected the United States' enduring promise of friendship, partnership and solidarity with the Americas.

The ship's crew included more than 465 U.S. and partner nation military doctors, nurses and corpsmen. In addition, about 90 medical and dental professional volunteers from nongovernmental organizations were aboard to support the medical assistance mission. The mission was supported by a team of civil service mariners who oversaw the ship's operation and navigation. During the mission, Comfort visited Esmeraldas, Ecuador, Paita, Peru, Turbo, Colombia, Riohacha, Colombia, and Trujillo, Honduras.

Health services provided during Comfort’s deployment included general surgery, ophthalmologic surgery, dermatology, medical evaluation and treatment, preventive medicine, dental screenings and treatment, optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, and general public health. Medical capabilities aboard the hospital ship include surgical and post-surgical rooms, a CAT-scan unit, four X-ray machines, a dental suite, an optometry lab, a physical therapy area, two oxygen-producing plants and a 5,000-unit blood bank.

During the port visits, Comfort’s medical team treated over 26,000 patients and conducted approximately 600 surgeries to include cataracts, hernias, cleft palates and more. Additionally, Comfort hosted approximately 1,000 distinguished visitors and guests during 53 distinguished visitor and media days to include the president of Honduras and prime minister of Peru.

Comfort’s Enduring Promise mission demonstrated U.S commitment to the Americas and is part of a continuum of support provided by U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). SOUTHCOM-sponsored civic assistance and humanitarian missions were conducted in close cooperation with partner nations in the region as well as with U.S. interagency partners at the U.S. Department of State and USAID. Similar missions include Continuing Promise, New Horizons, Beyond the Horizon, medical readiness training exercises and the Medical Civil Action Program.

This mission marked the sixth time the hospital ship has provided medical assistance in the region. Since first deploying to the region on a similar mission more than a decade ago, the hospital ship has visited 18 nations in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. During those missions, military medical professionals worked with host nation and civilian

partners to provide medical treatment to nearly 390,000 people, including more than 6,000 surgeries.

Strike Fighter Squadron 147 Declared Safe for Flight Operations

PACIFIC OCEAN –The “Argonauts” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147 completed their carrier qualifications Dec. 12 aboard USS Carl Vinson, the final required component for Commander, Joint Strike Fighter Wing, to issue the squadron its safe-for-flight-operations certification. This marks a major milestone for the U.S. Navy toward declaring initial operating capability next year.

The safe-for-flight operations certification is the final step for VFA-147’s transition from the F/A-18E Super Hornet to the F-35C Lightning II. This process ensures a squadron is manned with qualified personnel to implement maintenance and safety programs in support of fleet operations. All transitioning squadrons are required to complete this certification prior to independently conducting flight operations.

When introducing a new aircraft to the fleet, the appropriate fleet replacement squadron (FRS) is assigned oversight responsibility for the transitioning unit. The VFA-125 “Rough Raiders” were reactivated in January 2017 to fulfill the appropriate FRS role for the Lightning II. Since completing its combat deployment last winter, VFA-147 has been working with the Rough Raiders to accomplish the safe-for-flight-operations certification. The Argonauts will be able to operate independently from the Rough Raiders, having received safe-for-flight-operations certification.

“Since we returned from deployment last December, our team has

been driving toward fully bringing this platform online for the Navy," said VFA-147 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Patrick Corrigan. "As the Argonauts close out 2018 and the final stages of our safe-for-flight certification, we continue to exhibit the relentless drive required to meet transition goals and milestones. With this certification, we are announcing that we have the right skills, training and people to take this mission and execute it, to its fullest potential."

The safe-for-flight-operations certification encompasses areas such as equipment, personnel and programs. Not least among them is the requirement for the squadron to be in the physical custody of at least 30 percent of the assigned aircraft. Other requirements include the installation and operation of management information systems such as Autonomic Logistics Information System and its accompanying support networks. There is also a requirement for operational F-35C squadrons to maintain robust, on-track maintenance programs, as well as complete various inspections ranging from weapons to safety. Aircrew complete a transition flight syllabus and maintain certain proficiencies in accordance with Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures and Standardization.

"The Argonauts' safe-for-flight operations certification was earned through the herculean effort of squadron Sailors and is an acknowledgement that they have developed the skills to safely maintain and operate the F-35C Lightning II," said Joint Strike Fighter Wing Commander Capt. Max McCoy. "We eagerly look forward to declaring IOC and integrating the F-35C into the carrier strike group. This aircraft is a key component to maintaining the U.S. Navy's dominance anywhere in the world."

"VFA-147 continues to accomplish significant milestones, advancing this program closer to its ultimate goal of integrating the F-35C into the fleet," said McCoy. "The exceptional performance of the squadron throughout the entire transition process is a testament to the hard-working Sailors

who make the U.S. Navy F-35C program a reality. We will succeed because the professionals in this program will not let it fail. It is evident in all that they do. It is who we are as a team.”

Commander, Joint Strike Fighter Wing, headquartered at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, ensures that each F-35C squadron is fully combat-ready to conduct carrier-based, all-weather, attack, fighter and support missions for Commander, Naval Air Forces. With its stealth technology, advanced sensors, weapons capacity and range, the F-35C will be the first fifth-generation aircraft operated from an aircraft carrier. The Navy F-35C program is scheduled to declare initial operating capability by the end of February.

L3 OceanServer Awarded Contract for UUV to Support the Marine Corps

FALL RIVER, Mass. – L3 OceanServer was awarded a contract to support the U.S. Marine Corps Systems Command with an Iver3 unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) to be used for testing and evaluation, the company announce in a Dec. 13 release.

Over the past four years, L3 OceanServer has leveraged hundreds of thousands of operational hours on Iver vehicles to build a system with warfighter-driven attributes. With more than 300 vehicles sold to various customers worldwide, the Iver is a commercial, off-the-shelf product that delivers the latest advances in technology with proven performance in real-world situations.

The Iver is a purpose-built UUV that carries the highest-performance, man-portable sensor package available, including the iXBlue PHINS Compact Inertial Navigation System and the EdgeTech 2205B Bathymetry and Side Scan Sonar. The longer runtimes of the Iver, paired with its precise navigational accuracy, enable long ingress/egress missions to allow the operator greater standoff distances, increasing overall mission safety.

“L3 OceanServer has been focused on supporting the Marine Corps’ total mission profile,” said Daryl Slocum, general manager, L3 OceanServer. “We have incorporated their direct feedback into two of our vehicle platforms, the Iver3 and Iver4, to build a premier product that supports nearshore and very shallow hydrographic surveys.”

The Iver is an open platform and often the vehicle of choice for development programs interested in designing and testing new behaviors to be used across the fleet. Many of the recent mine countermeasure behaviors and automatic target recognition algorithms were originally designed and validated on the Iver platform. Today, there are more than 50 Iver systems in use by the U.S. Navy.

L3 OceanServer is part of the Maritime Sensor Systems sector within L3’s Communications & Networked Systems business segment.

Coast Guard Cutter Abbie Burgess Returns After Great

Lakes Patrol

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Abbie Burgess returned to its homeport of Rockland, Maine, Dec. 12 after a 37-day patrol to the Great Lakes region in support of Operation Fall Retrieve.

During the patrol, Abbie Burgess' crew assisted in efforts to remove or replace 1,219 seasonal aids to navigation in the 9th Coast Guard District area of responsibility. The crew also serviced two Canadian weather buoys.

Abbie Burgess transited through the St. Lawrence Seaway, making stops in Montreal, Buffalo, New York, and Cleveland.

"Although it was an unusually long trip for a cutter this size, I think the whole crew saw the benefits to our shipmates in District 9," said Chief Warrant Officer Michael Bollinger, commanding officer of Abbie Burgess. "It was an amazing journey, both accomplishing the mission and growing together as a crew. The morale of the crew during the patrol was phenomenal, and the amount of support provided by everyone in District 9 was incredible."

Abbie Burgess is a 175-foot coastal buoy tender with primary missions of maintaining aids-to-navigation and light icebreaking. It is named after a heroic lighthouse keeper from Rockland, Maine.

Marine Corps Awards OTAs to

Assess Handheld Targeting Capabilities

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) has awarded four Other Transaction Authorities (OTAs) to assess industry's capability to produce a Next Generation Handheld Targeting System (NGHTS) that is compact, rugged and lightweight.

The use of OTAs were approved by Congress in 2016 as a procurement method to pay for prototypes and to use nontraditional defense companies to spur innovation. The OTAs were awarded to BAE Systems, Elbit Systems of America, Fraser Optics and Northrop Grumman Systems Corp. The four companies will explore possibilities focused on the following criteria:

■ The system's overall ergonomics for supporting forward deployed, foot mobile users.

■ Target recognition, location and designation ranges during day and night operations.

■ The ability to integrate the system with the Target Handoff System Version 2 to view and manipulate target information.

■ Technological maturity, manufacturability and value engineering.

■ Sustainability at the operational user level.

NGHTS is a single, lightweight, man-portable system that enables Marines to quickly acquire targets; perform guidance of against targets; and generate target location data during combat operations.

"During the first phase, the four awarded companies will explore potential system capabilities and provide Marine Corps Systems Command with an in-depth study of the best solution

for our Marines at the best price," said Megan Full, contract specialist supporting Program Manager (PM) Fires at MCSC. "We will collect the findings by the second quarter of fiscal year 2019 and choose one or more vendors to move onto phase two where they will develop and demonstrate prototypes."

Currently, the Marine Corps uses four legacy systems: the Portable Lightweight Designator Rangefinder, Joint Terminal Attack Controller, Laser Target Designator and Thermal Laser Spot Imager. The intent is for NGHTS to replace all four systems.

"For the last four years, we have worked diligently to explore an option that condenses the legacy versions into one lightweight system with a reliable power supply that is rugged enough to throw onto a Marine's pack," said Jeff Nebel, Fire Support Coordination Team lead, PM Fires.

"The NGHTS will combine all of the legacy capabilities into one system that is compatible with both current and future fire support systems, and will support the Marine Corps for the next 15 to 20 years."

"The NGHTS will be an important advancement because it is planned to reduce the current weight of the laser designation and laser spot imaging capability by 60 percent, which will increase the mobility and lethality of our fire support-focused Marines," said Maj. Nathan Morales, Targeting Systems project officer, PM Fires. "This capability is focused on our ability to fight in the compartmentalized terrain outlined in the Marine Operating Concept."

San Pedro-Based Cutter Returns to Homeport Following First Drug Bust

SAN PEDRO, Calif. – The crew of a San Pedro-based Coast Guard cutter returned to their homeport Dec. 8 following a two-week patrol that included the ship's first drug bust, the 11th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The crew of the recently commissioned Cutter Forrest Rednour interdicted approximately 1,000 pounds of marijuana from a suspected smuggling vessel on Nov. 28 in international waters, approximately 30 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico maritime border.

A Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations Multi-Enforcement Aircraft spotted a northbound 25-foot cuddy cabin boat with three people aboard just before midnight, Nov. 27. The Forrest Rednour crew arrived on scene, deployed their interceptor boat and stopped the suspect boat. The ship's law enforcement team initiated a boarding of the U.S.-registered boat and discovered more than 40 bales of marijuana.

The Forrest Rednour crew transferred the marijuana and suspects to Customs and Border Protection agents at Ballast Point.

"These cutters are designed to seamlessly integrate with multiple agency partners to successfully execute an array of missions, so it was great to see it play out flawlessly so early in the ship's time in service," said Lt. Graham Sherman, commanding officer of Forrest Rednour. "All members of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism worked well together, and it led to a successful outcome."

The Regional Coordinating Mechanism (ReCoM) is an evolution of joint operations among interagency partners. Located in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco, the ReCoM partnership includes the U.S. Coast Guard, CBP's Air and Marine Operations, Office of Field Operations, U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations in cooperation with state and local law enforcement partners operating along the California coast.

Forrest Rednour was commissioned in San Pedro Nov. 8, and it is one of two new fast response cutters (FRCs) to be homeported in San Pedro. Two additional FRCs are scheduled to be homeported in San Pedro by next summer.

FRC's are 154-foot multimission ships designed to conduct drug and migrant interdictions; ports, waterways and coastal security operations; fisheries and environmental protection patrols; national defense missions; and search and rescue.

Marine Corps Declares Remaining Marines Involved in Aviation Mishap Deceased

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP BUTLER, Okinawa, Japan – The Marine Corps has pronounced the five remaining Marines involved in the F/A-18 and KC-130 aviation mishap deceased, the III Marine Expeditionary Force said in a Dec. 10 release. The change in status comes at the conclusion of search and rescue operations.

The next-of-kin for the five deceased Marines have been notified.

“Every possible effort was made to recover our crew and I hope the families of these selfless Americans will find comfort in the incredible efforts made by U.S., Japanese, and Australian forces during the search,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force.

“Our most valued asset is the individual Marine. We remain faithful to our Marines and their families as we support them through this difficult time. We ask for members of the public to please respect the family and allow them privacy.”

The KC-130 Hercules was assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 (VMGR-152, call sign “Sumo”), 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

“All of us in the Sumo family are extremely saddened following the announcement of the conclusion of search and rescue operations,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Mitchell T. Maury, commanding officer of VMGR-152. “We know this difficult decision was made after all resources were exhausted in the vigorous search for our Marines. Our thoughts are heavy, and our prayers are with all family and friends of all five aircrew.”

The F/A-18 Hornet involved was assigned to Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242. The aircraft were conducting regularly scheduled training. It is not confirmed that aerial refueling was ongoing when the mishap occurred.

The Marine Corps rigorously investigates all aviation mishaps to identify the causes, learn from them, and mitigate future incidents. The circumstances of the mishap are currently under investigation. There is no additional information available at this time. The identities of the Marines will be provided 24 hours after next of kin have been notified.

Transportation Secretary Announces $1.5 Billion in BUILD Grants to Revitalize Infrastructure

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Dec. 11 announced $1.5 billion in discretionary grant funding to 91 projects in 49 states and the District of Columbia. The grants are made through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants program and support road, rail, transit, and port infrastructure projects across the country.

“BUILD transportation grants are major investments in road, rail transit, and port projects that serve as a down payment on this administration’s commitment to America’s infrastructure,” Chao said.

Demand for BUILD grants far exceeded available funds, and the locally driven nature of the applications was clear in their volume and geographic diversity. 851 eligible applications from all 50 states, as well as U.S. territories and the District of Columbia, were sent in response to the BUILD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), nearly double the applications received in 2017. Overall, applicants in 2018 requested more than $10.9 billion in funding.

Project applications were evaluated by a team of 222 career staff in the department and selected based on established criteria, which included safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental protection and state of good repair. Further criteria included innovation, such as projects

supporting Connected or Autonomous Vehicles infrastructure, broadband service to underserved communities, as well as projects that demonstrate partnerships between the public and private sectors, and non-federal revenue for transportation infrastructure investments.

The department prioritized rural projects that aligned with the criteria and addressed rural infrastructure needs. The grant announcements made today will contribute to the construction or refurbishment of over 200 bridges nationwide, from North Carolina to the refurbishment of the Brooklyn Bridge.

The BUILD Transportation Grants rebalance a 10-year, historical underinvestment in rural communities. Rural applications more than doubled from the previous year's Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery applications. Underinvestment in rural infrastructure has led to a decline in the routes that connect communities in rural America. In this round, in which 59 percent of the applications were for rural projects, 62 projects were awarded to rural grant applications.

Several selected projects will contribute to America's energy independence. The Permian Basin projects and the Port Arthur Multimodal Rail Expansion and Berth Expansion Project will both contribute to the efficient transportation of domestic energy products. Border security infrastructure is also supported through BUILD Transportation grants, with projects such as the Calexico East Port of Entry Bridge Expansion in California making bridge improvements to accommodate freight traffic and improving other transportation facilities at the border crossing.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 appropriated $1.5 billion for BUILD Transportation grants. For this round of BUILD Transportation grants, the maximum grant award is $25 million for a single project, and no more than $150 million

can be awarded to a single state. There is a $5 million minimum award for projects located in urban areas, and a $1 million minimum for rural projects.