

Navy to Christen Expeditionary Fast Transport Puerto Rico

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen its newest Expeditionary Fast Transport, the future USNS Puerto Rico (T-EPF 11), during a ceremony Nov. 10 at the Austal USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama, the Defense Department said in a release.

The principal speaker is congresswoman Jenniffer González-Colón, resident commissioner of Puerto Rico. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor will serve as the ship's sponsor. In a time-honored Navy tradition, she will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

“This ship honors the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the contributions Puerto Ricans have made to our nation and Navy and Marine Corps team,” said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer. “USNS Puerto Rico will provide our commanders high-speed sealift mobility and agility and I am thankful for this ship, her crew, and our industrial force teammates whose service makes this great ship possible.”

The future USNS Puerto Rico will be the first active ship in naval service to honor the island in the West Indies east of Hispaniola. An Alaska-class cruiser named Puerto Rico was authorized July 19, 1940, but construction was canceled June 24, 1943.

With an all-aluminum shallow-draft hull, the EPF is a commercial-based catamaran capable of intra-theater personnel and cargo lift providing combatant commanders high-speed sealift mobility with inherent cargo handling capability and agility to achieve positional advantage over operational distances.

EPF-class ships are designed to transport 600 short tons of military cargo 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. The ship is capable of operating in shallow-draft ports and waterways, interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, and on/off-loading a combat-loaded Abrams main battle tank (M1A2).

The EPF includes a flight deck for helicopter operations and an off-load ramp that will allow vehicles to quickly drive off the ship. EPF's shallow draft (under 15 feet) further enhances littoral operations and port access.

The EPF program delivered its ninth ship late last year, USNS City of Bismarck (T-EPF 9), with delivery of USNS Burlington (EPF 10) planned for mid-November. Puerto Rico and Newport (EPF 12) are currently under construction at Austal's shipyard.

Sparton, Leidos Team on Mk5 Acoustic Device Countermeasure

DELEON SPRINGS, Fla. – Sparton Corp. has teamed with Leidos Maritime Systems to support the Acoustic Device Countermeasure (ADC) Mk5 program, Sparton said in a Nov. 6 release.

The Mk5 is a next-generation countermeasure intended to replace the ADC Mk3. The ADC Mk5 is a 3-inch diameter expendable device that is submarine launched from internal signal ejectors and is part of a submarine's defense against acoustic-homing torpedoes.

On Sept. 13, the U.S. Navy announced Leidos had been awarded the contract (valued up to \$36.1 million) under a competitive solicitation. Sparton will contribute to the contract's scope of work, which includes the design, development, fabrication, integration, testing and low-rate initial production of the U.S. Navy's Mk5 program. Sparton will also provide manufacturing services to support system fabrication.

"Sparton is excited to leverage our knowledge of maritime acoustic communication systems, packaging, and deployment systems for this new opportunity", said Jim Lackemacher, group vice president of the Engineered Components & Products Segment. "Sparton looks forward to collaborating with Leidos to bring this vital capability to the fleet."

Coast Guard Returns 71 Migrants to the Dominican Republic Following At-Sea Interdictions

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard returned 71 of 81 interdicted migrants to law enforcement authorities in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, over the weekend following multiple at-sea interdictions off Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the 7th District Coast Guard said in a Nov. 6 release.

Ten other migrants interdicted are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico for attempting to illegally re-enter a U.S. territory.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group.

“Each vessel was grossly overloaded, which created an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation for the people aboard,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, chief of response for Coast Guard Sector San Juan. “The great coordination between the Coast Guard and our interagency partners prevented significant loss of life at sea.

“The Coast Guard and our local partners maintain a robust patrol presence in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean with both air and surface assets, and any migrant interdicted at sea regardless of nationality will be repatriated back to their country of origin,” he said.

During patrols from Oct. 31 through Nov. 2, aircrews with a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry maritime patrol aircraft detected three grossly overloaded, makeshift boats in international waters traveling illegally toward Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon crew interdicted and safely embarked 16 migrants from one vessel on Oct. 31; 53 migrants from a second vessel on Nov. 1 with the help of Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations-Caribbean Air and Marine Branch crews; and 12 migrants from a third vessel on Nov. 2.

Dixon and Coast Guard Cutter Decisive returned the 71 migrants to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The 10 migrants facing prosecution were transferred to the custody of Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Puerto Rico.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

Decisive is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida, while Richard Dixon is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.

AeroVironment Awarded Puma AE UAS Contract for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Ally

MONROVIA, Calif. –AeroVironment Inc. has received a \$3.2 million firm-fixed-price contract from the U.S. Department of Defense to provide RQ-20B Puma AE II small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), training and support to an allied nation in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility, the company announced in a Nov. 6 release. Delivery is anticipated by March 30.

“The vast, diverse landscape of the INDOPACOM area of operation demands small unmanned aircraft systems that can support ground, riverine and maritime operations effectively,” said Kirk Flittie, vice president and general manager of AeroVironment’s Unmanned Aircraft Systems business. “The combat-proven Puma has demonstrated its unique effectiveness in a wide range of operating environments, from mountains to deserts, from the Arctic to Antarctica, on land and on the open ocean, delivering actionable intelligence to help customers proceed with certainty.”

AeroVironment’s family of small drones comprise the majority of all unmanned aircraft in the U.S. Department of Defense inventory and its rapidly growing international customer base numbers more than 45 allied governments.

“This contract is a good example of the additional procurement potential among our international customers,” Flittie said.

The AeroVironment Puma is designed for land-based and maritime operations. Capable of landing in water or on the ground, the

all-environment Puma, with its Mantis i45 sensor suite, empowers the operator with extended flight time and a level of imaging capability never before available in the small UAS class.

Navy EP-3 Intercepted Over the Black Sea

NAPLES, Italy – A U.S. EP-3 Aries aircraft flying in international airspace over the Black Sea was intercepted by a Russian SU-27 on Nov. 5, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

“This interaction was determined to be unsafe due to the SU-27 conducting a high-speed pass directly in front of the mission aircraft, which put our pilots and crew at risk,” the release said. “The intercepting SU-27 made an additional pass, closing with the EP-3 and applying its afterburner while conducting a banking turn away. The crew of the EP-3 reported turbulence following the first interaction, and vibrations from the second. The duration of the intercept was approximately 25 minutes.

“While the Russian military is within its right to exercise within international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible. We expect them to behave within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents, including the 1972 Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas (INCSEA). Unsafe actions increase the risk of miscalculation and potential for midair collisions.

“The U.S. aircraft was operating in accordance with

international law and did not provoke this Russian activity.”

Sikorsky Awarded Contract to Sustain Navy, Marine Super Stallion, Sea Dragon Helicopters

STRATFORD, Conn. – Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, was awarded a performance-based logistics contract with a value of \$717 million to provide supply and logistics support to the entire fleet of in-service CH-53E Super Stallions and MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters, the company said in a Nov. 5 release.

The H-53E is a battle-proven heavy-lift helicopter continuing to support the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy in missions at home and around the world.

The scope of the contract includes repairs, overhauls, spares, obsolescence mitigation and asset management services over four years. Contract performance is based on material availability metrics with additional incentives added for demand reductions, maintainability enhancements and aircraft readiness contributions.

The expanded comprehensive arrangement will cover additional readiness-critical components, including main and tail rotor blades, main gearbox, main rotor head and flight control components, as well as accessories such as refueling probe and cargo system components.

“We expect the expanded performance-based logistics to

measurably improve material availability and reduce support cost while increasing overall aircraft readiness,” said Pierre Garant, Sikorsky senior program manager, Marine Corps In-Service Programs. “Our support infrastructure and past performance-based logistics successes will result in Sikorsky continuing to reliably provide mission support critical to the warfighter.”

As the Marine Corps’ heavy lift-helicopter designed for the transportation of heavy material and supplies, the CH-53E Super Stallion is compatible with most amphibious class ships. With four-and-one-half hours’ endurance, the helicopter can move heavy equipment over rugged terrain in bad weather and at night. The MH-53E Sea Dragon fills the Navy’s need for long-range minesweeping missions, in addition to heavy-lift duties. The H-53E has consistently proven its worth to the fleet commanders with its versatility and range.

The contract will provide the vital and affordable support to the entire fleet – expanding a reliable base of long-term sustainment as the aircraft continue to fully operate until the introduction of the replacement aircraft, the Sikorsky CH-53K King Stallion.

Vigilant Returns Home Following 63-Day Caribbean Patrol

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant returned home Nov. 6 to Cape Canaveral following a 63-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Vigilant concluded the patrol in which the crew conducted numerous at-sea vessel boardings to ensure the safety of life at sea and enforce U.S. federal laws. The crew also worked with partner nations to enhance national security and stability throughout the Caribbean basin.

During the crew's two months at sea, they detected and interdicted two drug trafficking vessels, detained seven smugglers, and seized over \$700,000 worth of narcotics. The Vigilant crew worked closely with representatives from the Bahamas and Haiti to effect prosecution of the suspected criminals.

The Vigilant crew also saved the lives of three men who had been lost at sea for over six days. The men's sailboat was caught in a gale, blown over 100 miles from shore, and then becalmed. The survivors had been without water for two days when they were found by the Vigilant crew. After giving them necessary medical attention, the crew returned the survivors safely to their home country.

The Vigilant is a multimission 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include illegal drug and migrant interdiction, as well as search and rescue. The Vigilant patrols throughout the Caribbean basin to ensure safety of life at sea and to enforce international and domestic laws.

Huntington Ingalls Receives Contract Modification for

First Columbia-Class Sub

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries announced Nov. 6 that its Newport News Shipbuilding division has been awarded a \$197 million modification to a previously awarded contract from General Dynamics Electric Boat to provide long-lead-time material and advance construction activities for the first Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine.

The advance procurement funds will be used to purchase major components and commodity material and to begin advance construction on Columbia (SSBN 826). Newport News is a major subcontractor for the construction of the new class of ballistic-missile submarines, which are being designed to replace the Ohio-class submarines.

“This contract modification is critical in engaging the submarine industrial base as we continue our efforts to support starting full construction in fiscal year 2021,” said Jason Ward, Newport News’ vice president for Columbia-class construction.

Construction of the 12-submarine Columbia class is expected to begin in fiscal 2021, with the first delivery to the Navy in 2028.

Leonardo to Equip the New German K130 Corvettes with

OTO 76/62 Gun

ROME – Leonardo, a Finmeccanica company, was selected to provide the OTO 76 mm/62-caliber gun for the German Navy's new K130 corvettes, the company said in a Nov. 1 release

The OTO 76/62 SR (Super Rapid) system is a best in class in its segment, in use with almost 60 navies worldwide. It has recently successfully completed an extensive vulnerability assessment campaign ensuring its resilience to cyberattacks. Managed by a state-of-the-art control console maximizing its performances, the system can be integrated on any type and class of ship, including smaller units

Leonardo signed a contract with the Bundesamt für Ausrüstung, Informationstechnik und Nutzung der Bundeswehr, the German Federal Office in charge of defense acquisitions, to provide seven OTO 76/62 SR systems that will equip the new K130 corvettes of the German Navy. The contract also includes training and spare parts supply.

With this new acquisition, Leonardo's naval gun becomes the reference defense system for the German Navy, which has already tested the capabilities of the compact version of the system, integrated on the first batch of corvettes following a previous contract.

Buono Named New U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Superintendent

WASHINGTON – Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby announced Jack Buono as the new superintendent for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Nov. 2. Buono will take command at the academy on Nov.

9. He most recently served as president and CEO of ExxonMobil's shipping subsidiary, SeaRiver Maritime Inc.

"As a Kings Point graduate who spent his entire career in maritime leadership roles, Mr. Buono will help educate and inspire the next generation of maritime cadets," Buzby said.

Following his graduation from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Buono worked his way up from a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed third mate to an unlimited master mariner with ExxonMobil Corp. In 1991, he transferred ashore and, after rising through several management positions, was elected to president and CEO of SeaRiver, where he served until his retirement in 2016 after 38 years with ExxonMobil and SeaRiver.

"Jack Buono is the ideal candidate to take the Academy to the next level," Buzby said. "He has impeccable credentials on the waterfront and, as an alumnus, fully understands the academy's mission to provide its students with the highest caliber of training and education needed to lead afloat and ashore."

Buono received a Bachelor of Science in marine transportation with a minor in management from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1978 and was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, where he served for 11 years.

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York is one of the five federal service academies. This year, it celebrates its 75th anniversary, having been dedicated in September 1943 to provide the nation with a steady source of highly trained merchant marine officers and naval reserve officers. Today, graduates serve not only in the commercial merchant marine, but also on active duty in all branches of the armed forces.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration is responsible for overseeing the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, including the hiring of key academy positions.

As part of the selection process, Buono met with a number of midshipmen, faculty and staff from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, in addition to alumni and industry leaders.