Virginia-Class Submarine Delaware is Launched

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries has launched the recently christened Virginia-class submarine Delaware (SSN 791) into the water for the first time at the company's Newport News Shipbuilding division.

During a three-day process that began Dec. 12, the 7,800-ton submarine was moved out of a construction facility and into a floating dry dock using a transfer car system. The floating dry dock was submerged, and the submarine was launched into the James River. Once in the water, the boat then was moved to the shipyard's submarine pier for final outfitting, testing and crew certification.

"Successfully launching Delaware into the water the first time is a proud moment for the Virginia-class submarine team and the thousands of dedicated shipbuilders involved in constructing the ship," said Dave Bolcar, Newport News' vice president of submarine construction. "With this significant key event behind us, we look forward to completing construction and sea trials next year so this great warship can join the fleet and defend our nation."

Delaware is the 18th Virginia-class submarine built as part of the teaming agreement with General Dynamics Electric Boat and the ninth to be delivered by Newport News. More than 10,000 shipbuilders from Newport News and Electric Boat have participated in Delaware's construction since the work began in September 2013. The submarine was christened by Jill Biden, the former Second Lady of the United States and the ship's sponsor, during a ceremony in October.

Following testing, Delaware is scheduled to be delivered to the U.S. Navy next year.

Hamilton Returns Home from 54-Day Counter-Drug Patrol

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton crew returned to home Dec. 17 at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Charleston, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Hamilton's crew spent the majority of their 54-day deployment conducting counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. At the beginning of the patrol, Hamilton executed an exhaustive three-day search, along with Coast Guard aircraft, for a civilian aircraft that reportedly crashed approximately 100 miles off the coast of South Carolina.

While patrolling the drug-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Hamilton detained 21 suspected drug smugglers from five different vessels, and seized over 4.7 tons of cocaine, valued at over $140 million bound for the shores of the United States. In addition, the cutter crossed the equator, a milestone for sailors and cuttermen alike.

Demonstrating the robust command and control capabilities of the national security cutter, Hamilton's crew temporarily assumed complete tactical control of all counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean, coordinating tasking of all air and surface assets in the fight against transnational criminal and drug-trafficking organizations.

During the final days of the patrol, Hamilton's crew responded to report of an injured crew member from the Panamanian-flagged cargo vessel Pacific Talent in the Gulf of Mexico. Hamilton's crew supported the medical evacuation of the crew

member by directing response operations, providing vital command and control, and delivering fuel to the helicopter that hoisted the crew member to safety.

Hamilton’s crew visited Aruba, Panama, Costa Rica, and made two transits through the Panama Canal. In Golfito, Costa Rica, Hamilton’s crew transferred four suspected drug smugglers to Costa Rica’s Policia Control de Druga following the successful interdiction of a Costa Rican-flag fishing vessel increasing the nation’s partnerships in the fight against drug trafficking organizations.

Building upon that partnership, Hamilton’s crew hosted Costa Rican officials aboard to discuss current and future cooperation between Costa Rica and the United States. Attendees included the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Sharon Day; U.S. Coast Guard Deputy for Operations Policy and Capabilities, Rear Adm. Meredith Austin; as well as Costa Rica’s National Assembly Speaker of the House, Minister of Public Security and Commandant of the Costa Rican Coast Guard. Members of U.S. Joint Task Force-Bravo, based out of Honduras, conducted a medical readiness exercise, enhanced dialogue and reinforced the United States’ commitment to Costa Rica.

“I could not be more impressed by this crew and their dedication to keeping over 4,290 kilograms of cocaine off of the streets,” stated Capt. Mark Gordon, Hamilton’s commanding officer. “It has been a busy two months for this ship and her crew in this constantly demanding maritime environment. We’re excited to be returning to homeport for the holidays and to prepare for our next patrol.”

ONR Recognizes 2019 Young Investigators

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Office of Naval Research (ONR) recognized 25 awardees of the 2019 Young Investigator Program (YIP) Dec. 17. These recipients will share $16.5 million in funding to conduct naval-relevant scientific research with direct benefits for Sailors and Marines.

“To meet the demand signal from the National Defense Strategy, we must attract the best and brightest minds to work on naval warfighting challenges. The Young Investigator Program does just that, and I’m honored to announce the recipients for 2019,” said Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. David Hahn. “Since 1985, this program has attracted outstanding scientists and engineers from across academia to support our Navy and Marine Corps – and in this era of great power competition, that is more important than ever before.”

The ONR YIP is a highly competitive program in which academic achievements and potential for scientific breakthroughs are major factors in the evaluation process. The winning candidates were selected from more than 260 applicants – all of whom are college and university faculty and obtained a PhD within the past seven years.

Awardees represent 23 academic institutions nationwide, supporting efforts related to aerodynamics, autonomy, energetics, power and energy, machine learning, sensing and sensors, quantum materials and undersea-breathing technologies. The YIP awards support laboratory equipment, graduate student stipends and scholarships, as well as other expenses critical to ongoing and planned research. Typical grants range between $500,000 to $750,000 over a three-year period.

Established in 1985, the ONR YIP is one of the nation's oldest and most selective basic research early career awards in science and technology. Its purpose is to fund tenure-track academic researchers, or equivalent, whose scientific pursuits show outstanding promise for supporting the Department of Defense, while also promoting their professional development.

Navy Marks Establishment of the First CMV-22B Squadron

SAN DIEGO – The Navy held a ceremony Dec. 14 at Naval Base Coronado to commemorate the establishment of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30, the Navy's first CMV-22B squadron, commander, Naval Air Forces Public Affairs, said in a release.

VRM-30 was established to begin the Navy's transition from the C-2A Greyhound, which has provided logistics support to aircraft carriers for four decades, to the CMV-22B, which has an increased operational range, greater cargo capacity, faster cargo loading/unloading, increased survivability and enhanced beyond-line-of-sight communications compared to the C-2A.

"Where no instructions existed, no patch existed, no 'here's how we are going to perform our duties everyday' existed, this team will define that. And it's exciting because we can establish right off the bat those best practices," said Vice Adm. DeWolfe H. Miller III, commander, Naval Air Forces. "This platform is our future and when you look at the nature of the future fight, we need that versatility, that flexibility that's going to be provided in every subsequent squadron that transitions."

The first CMV-22B aircraft are scheduled to be delivered to the squadron in fiscal 2020. While VRM-30 awaits the arrival of the CMV-22B, Navy pilots and maintainers will train with the U.S. Marine Corps, which has flown the MV-22 since 2007. As the C-2A squadrons stand down, their pilots and aircrew will transition to the CMV-22B. The final C-2A squadron is scheduled to stand down in 2024.

The CMV-22B is the U.S. Navy version of the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft.

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.