U.S. Navy Commissions Littoral Combat Ship Sioux City

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – The U.S. Navy commissioned USS Sioux City (LCS 11) – the nation's sixth Freedom-variant littoral combat ship – at the U.S. Naval Academy Nov. 17, Lockheed Martin said in a release.

"We are confident that LCS 11 will be what the Navy needs, when the fleet needs it," said Joe DePietro, vice president, Small Combatants and Ship Systems, Lockheed Martin. "We remain focused on delivering these ships as quickly as possible with increasing capability and lethality. These ships will have a long lifespan, and we're working with the Navy to make LCS even stronger and more resilient."

The Freedom-variant LCS integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission capability from deep water to the littorals. LCS 11 is equipped to support surface warfare.

LCS continues to increase in capability. This year, LCS 5 and 7 completed Longbow Hellfire missile testing, LCS 9 completed Rolling Airframe Missile testing and LCS 5 and 9 participated in Fleet Weeks around the United States.

The Freedom-variant LCS is designed to integrate modular weapons, as well as manned and unmanned vehicles to deliver critical warfighting capability to the fleet in mine counter measures, anti-surface warfare and anti-submarine warfare.

"LCS is our most effective fleet asset to counter asymmetric small craft threats," said Adm. John Richardson, chief of naval operations. "This ship and the ships like her are going to complicate any adversary's operating picture. You're going

to need to keep track of Sioux City when she's at sea, because if you don't, she's going to make you pay for that."

There are seven ships in various stages of production and test at Fincantieri Marinette Marine, where the Freedom-variant LCS is built. The next Freedom-variant in the class is LCS 13, the future USS Wichita, slated for commissioning in Mayport, Florida, in January. LCS 19 is scheduled for christening on Dec. 15.

"Two thousand men and women crafted this ship from flat steel to the capable and agile surface combatant being commissioned. The men and women who sail this ship have an enormous responsibility in protecting our nation and allies, and we consider it a privilege to support these missions," said Jan Allman, president and CEO of Fincantieri Marinette Marine. "I am confident that when called upon, the USS Sioux City will always prevail."

Spencer Returns to Boston After 80-Day Counter-Narcotic Patrol

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Spencer returned to its homeport of Boston Nov.12 after an 80-day patrol in the Eastern Pacific interdicting drugs, rescuing sea turtles and saving a mariner off the coast of North Carolina, the 1st Coast Guard District said in a release.

During the deployment in the Eastern Pacific, Spencer's crew interdicted a smuggling vessel with 4,497 pounds of cocaine on board, an estimated street value of $65 million.

The crew also rescued two sea turtles entangled in fishing nets, including a Hawksbill sea turtle.

On the return home from their deployment, the crew diverted to assist in a search-and-rescue case off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The crew rendezvoused with the crew of the 48-foot sailboat, Marie Elena, launched their small boat crew and transported the distressed 57-year-old crew member aboard the cutter.

An MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina, hoisted the crew member from the Spencer and transported him to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia.

Spencer's crew also participated in hurricane recovery efforts during Hurricane Florence.

"The crew of the Spencer is looking forward to spending the holiday season with family and friends after a successful and eventful 80-day patrol," said Cmdr. John McTamney, commanding officer of Spencer.

Spencer is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a crew complement of 100.

Austal Delivers Expeditionary Fast Transport Burlington to Navy

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA delivered the expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Burlington (EPF 10) to the U.S. Navy during a ceremony onboard the ship at the company's

headquarters Nov. 15, the company said in a release. This is the fourth ship Austal has delivered to the Navy this year.

The EPF program provides the Navy with a high-speed intra-theater transport capability. The 338-foot long Burlington is an aluminum catamaran capable of transporting 600 tons, 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots and is designed to operate in austere ports and waterways, too shallow and narrow for the larger ships in the surface fleet, providing added flexibility to U.S. warfighters worldwide. The ship's flight deck can also support flight operations for a wide variety of manned and unmanned aircraft, including a CH-53 Super Stallion.

"Today's delivery of Burlington marks the 10th EPF we have delivered to the U.S. Navy, a milestone achieved as a result of the dedicated shipbuilding team made up of Austal employees, our Navy partners, industry suppliers and both local and state community and legislative support," said Austal USA President Craig Perciavalle. "These ships continue to deliver exceptional capability around the globe. The U.S. Navy is taking these great ships and expanding their work to support a variety of operational needs, demonstrating their significance, flexibility and value to the future 355-ship Navy."

Upon delivery of USNS Burlington, two additional Spearhead-class EPFs are under construction at Austal's Mobile shipyard. Puerto Rico (EPF 11) was launched this week and will now prepare for sea trials and Newport (EPF 12) is being erected in final assembly. Austal also recently received instruction from the Navy to order long lead-time materials for EPF 13.MIAMI – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter James offloaded approximately 18.5 tons of cocaine Nov. 15 in Port Everglades worth more than an estimated $500 million wholesale seized in international waters in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The drugs were interdicted off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America by multiple U.S. Coast Guard cutters.

The offload represents 15 separate, suspected drug-smuggling vessel interdictions by the Coast Guard:

■ James was responsible for nine cases seizing an estimated 19,288 pounds of cocaine.
■ Bear was responsible for one case, seizing an estimated 44 pounds of cocaine.
■ Stratton was responsible for one case, seizing an estimated 440 pounds of cocaine.
■ Active was responsible for two cases, seizing an estimated 3,148 pounds of cocaine.
■ Dauntless was responsible for two cases, seizing an estimated 2,050 pounds of cocaine.
■ Venturous was responsible for two cases seizing an estimated 3,100 pounds of cocaine.
■ Spencer was responsible for one case seizing an estimated 4,497 pounds of cocaine.
■ Campbell was responsible for one case seizing an estimated 5,441 pounds of cocaine.

Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security are involved in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations. The fight against transnational organized crime networks in the Eastern Pacific requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to prosecutions by U.S. Attorneys in California, on the East Coast and in Puerto Rico.

Bear is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. Stratton is a 418-foot Legend-class cutter homeported in Alameda, California. Active is a 210-foot

Reliance-class cutter homeported in Port Angeles, Washington. Dauntless is a 210-foot Reliance-class cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida. Venturous is a 210-foot Reliance-class cutter homeported in St. Petersburg, Florida. James is a 418-foot Legend-class cutter homeported in North Charleston, South Carolina. Spencer is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Boston. Campbell is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Kittery, Maine.

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MBDA: Successful First Launch for Marte ER missile

PARIS – MBDA's Marte ER anti-ship missile has completed its first firing, successfully passing a major phase in its development, the company said in a release.

The firing trial was carried out on Nov. 9 in an Italian test range. The Marte ER missile flew for more than 100 kilometers on a planned trajectory that included several waypoints and sea skimming flight, successfully testing all flying phases.

"This test is a further confirmation of the robustness of the ER version of the Marte family of multiplatform anti-ship missiles that can be launched by ships, helicopters, coastal batteries and fast jets," said Pasquale Di Bartolomeo, executive group director for Sales & Business Development and managing director MBDA Italia.

"The Marte family has a strong and successful history both at domestic and international levels: most recently with Marte ER being ordered earlier in 2018 by the Qatar Emiri Air Force for their new NH90 helicopters. Marte is a single product family that can cover several missions, offering our customers a high level of operational flexibility in the area of maritime superiority, a domain where MBDA in Italy has been able throughout its long history not only to maintain but also to grow as well as further develop competencies and know-how."

The Marte ER program is progressing at full speed in order to meet customers' requirements. Having completed the 18-month system definition phase, the full integration of Marte ER on the Eurofighter Typhoon platform is proceeding at pace in order to implement an anti-ship capability onto the fighter.

Austal USA Christens Future USNS Puerto Rico

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal celebrated the christening of expeditionary fast transport (EPF) the future USNS Puerto Rico (EPF 11) with a ceremony at its state-of-the-art shipbuilding facility Nov. 10, the company said in a release. Puerto Rico is the 11th of 12 EPFs Austal has under contract with the U.S. Navy with a combined value of over $1.9 billion.

“Austal is excited to christen another amazing ship,” said Austal USA President Craig Perciavalle. “Puerto Rico is one step closer to joining her sister ships in supporting important missions across the globe.”

Nine Spearhead-class EPFs have been delivered and are serving as an affordable solution to fulfilling the Military Sealift Command’s requirements worldwide. The future USNS Burlington is scheduled for delivery to the Navy later this month and two more EPFs, including EPF 11, are under construction at Austal’s Mobile shipyard. Austal also received instruction from the Navy to order long lead-time materials for EPF 13 in October.

“Congratulations to the incredible Navy – Industry team for achieving this important milestone,” Perciavalle said. “You should be proud of the important service you’re providing our country.”

In addition to being in full-rate production for the EPF program, Austal is also the Navy’s prime contractor for the Independence-variant of the littoral combat ship (LCS) program. Austal has delivered nine LCSs, while an additional six are in various stages of construction.

Coast Guard Repatriates 86 Haitian Migrants

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter Thetis crew repatriated 86 Haitian migrants Nov. 11 to Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

While on routine patrol, a Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew, forward deployed to Great Inagua, Bahamas, located an overlaed 40-foot sail freighter 26 nautical miles north of Punta Maisi, Cuba. Thetis was diverted, arrived on scene and safely embarked the migrants for safety of life at sea concerns.

The Jayhawk helicopter crew provided overhead support while embarkation was conducted due to deteriorating weather in the area.

“This illegal migrant venture and vessel were ill-equipped to carry its passengers and dangerously overloaded,” said Cmdr. Luis Rodriguez, deputy chief of enforcement. “If it had capsized before we arrived on scene, this situation could have ended differently as we have tragically seen before.”

Once aboard Coast Guard cutters, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and medical attention.

Approximately 221 Haitian migrants have attempted to illegally migrate to the U.S. via the maritime environment since Oct. 1 compared to 2,488 Haitian migrants in fiscal year 2018. These numbers represent the total number of at-sea interdictions, landings and disruptions in the Florida Straits, the Caribbean and Atlantic.

Thetis is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Key West, Florida.

MBDA to Develop the Next Generation of the MICA missile

PARIS – The French Defence Procurement Agency DGA (Direction Générale de l'Armement) has awarded MBDA the contract for the MICA NG (Missile d'Interception et de Combat Aérien Nouvelle Génération) program to develop the next generation of the MICA missile. With deliveries scheduled to begin in 2026, MICA NG will be available to arm the current and future versions of the Rafale combat aircraft.

MICA NG is intended as the replacement for the MICA missiles currently in operational service with the French armed forces and exported to 14 countries worldwide. The NG program includes an extensive redesign of the current MICA family while keeping the same aerodynamics, mass and center of gravity. This is done to minimize the amount of adaptation required to operate the new system with existing platforms and launchers. The unique concept that has ensured the ongoing success of MICA for two decades remains: the option of two different seekers (infrared and radio frequency) and two launch modes (rail and ejection) in a single missile casing.

The technological step changes will provide the capability to counter future threats. This includes targets with reduced infrared and electromagnetic signatures, atypical targets (unmanned aerial vehicles and small aircraft), as well as the threats normally countered by air-to-air missiles (combat

aircraft and helicopters).

More specifically, the infrared seeker will use a matrix sensor providing greater sensitivity. Meanwhile the radio frequency seeker will use an AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Antenna), enabling smart detection strategies.

The reduced volume of electronic components within MICA NG will allow it to carry a larger quantity of propellant, thereby significantly extending the range of the missile. Utilizing a new double-pulse rocket motor will also provide additional energy to the missile at the end of its flight to improve maneuverability and the ability to intercept long-range targets. Lastly, the addition of internal sensors will allow the monitoring of the status of the weapon throughout its life (including during storage and transport), contributing to significantly reduced maintenance requirements and cost of ownership.

“We are proud of the work completed with the DGA to achieve maximum technical and financial optimization,” said Antoine Bouvier, MBDA chief executive at the program launch. “The fact that we have reached this stage is thanks to the vision that we were able to share with our French customer to address its operational challenges, as well as our own long-term commercial challenges. The upgrading of the MICA family will enable us to support the armed forces throughout the remaining operational life of the Rafale.”

Navy Awards SAIC Contract for

C5ISR

MCLEAN, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contract for the production and delivery of integrated command, control, communications, computers, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C5ISR) systems, networks and support equipment in support of the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SSC) Atlantic, the company said in a Nov. 8 release. The single-award contract has a five-year period of performance worth approximately $597 million.

The contract has an additional two-year award term that, if earned, would increase its potential value to approximately $861 million. Delivery/task orders awarded under the contract will include procuring, fabricating, assembling, integrating, testing, inspecting and delivering a highly diverse range of systems that include various complex designs provided by Navy program offices in the form of technical data packages.

Systems vary in complexity, but generally include the integration of engineered cable assemblies, mounting kit assemblies, hardware, and software/security applications necessary to provide the warfighter with the capability to communicate, maintain situational awareness and achieve information dominance. Work will be performed in Charleston, South Carolina, and Norfolk, Virginia.

“We are proud to continue to help SSC Atlantic streamline their system production services and provide warfighters with the latest technology available,” said Jim Scanlon, SAIC senior vice president and general manager of the Defense Systems Customer Group. “For this contract, SAIC enables shared resources across the command, resulting in cost savings; as we provide complex electronic systems to the Navy.”

HM-15, Lewis B. Puller Team Up for Training

MANAMA, Bahrain – An MH-53E Sea Dragon assigned to the "Blackhawks" of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron (HM) 15 embarked the expeditionary sea base ship USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3) for the first time in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations for interoperability training Oct. 28-Nov. 7.

The training focused on improving airborne mine countermeasures (MCM) capability and interoperability in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility (AOR). Lewis B. Puller is capable of supporting a wide variety of missions including crisis response, counter-piracy operations, maritime security operations and humanitarian aid/disaster relief. By embarking HM 15, the will add the airborne MCM mission to its expanding repertoire.

U.S. 5th Fleet's Task Force 52 deputy commander, Capt. Andy Lamb of the U.K. Royal Navy, visited the Puller to observe the training.

"Ensuring maritime access for the free flow of trade is what mine countermeasures is about," said Lamb. "The integration of HM-15 with Puller is a key component of this and demonstrates first-class versatility and readiness."

The airborne aspect of MCM is one of the three areas that support the MCM triad. In addition to shipboard and expeditionary MCM, airborne MCM helps ensure stability and security in the region's three critical chokepoints. Reoccurring training opportunities ensure that Task Force 52 is prepared to handle any potential threats to the free flow of commerce.

The expeditionary sea-base platform supports Naval Amphibious Force, Task Force 51, 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade's (TF 51/5's) diverse missions that include crisis response, airborne MCM, counter-piracy operations, maritime security operations and humanitarian aid/disaster relief missions while enabling TF 51/5 to extend its expeditionary presence in the world's most volatile regions.

"Lewis B. Puller provides TF 51/5 and 5th Fleet a permanent platform that can be rapidly reconfigured to support vastly different mission sets in mere days," said Capt. Scott Hattaway, the ship's commanding officer. "Embarking the Blackhawks of HM-15 to conduct airborne MCM operations demonstrates this flexibility, especially in light of the entire equipment on load to achieve full mission-capability and actively conducting AMCM operations was accomplished in less than three days pierside."

Lewis B. Puller was commissioned as a warship after previously being classified as a "USNS" ship in August 2017. Redesignating the ship as a commissioned warship allows the Navy greater operational flexibility and provide critical support to TF 51/5's joint forces at sea, from the sea and ashore to meet potential threats in the 5th Fleet area of operations.

U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.