

Winds Damage Navy TH-73 Training Helicopters at Whiting Field



By Richard Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – A strong wind that swept through Naval Air Station Whiting Field caused damage more than three dozen new TH-73 Thrasher training helicopters earlier this month, according to a Navy spokesman.

The following statement was issued by the Commander, Naval Air Training Command (CNATRA):

“On May 13, at approximately 10:35 a.m. CST, a significant weather event involving high winds up to 71 knots (gusting) caused damage to 41 TH-73 Thrasher helicopters assigned to Training Air Wing (TAW) 5. No injury to personnel occurred during the incident and there has been no reported damage to

any TH-57 Sea Ranger or T-6 Texan II aircraft positioned on the flight line. All aircraft were parked aboard Naval Air Station Whiting Field during the incident. The full extent of the resources needed to restore the fleet has not yet been finalized, however, repairs are not expected to exceed a month. No operational impact to the CNATRA mission is expected due to the availability of CNATRA's fleet of TH-57 Sea Ranger helicopters that remain undamaged."

The TH-73A, built by Leonardo's AgustaWestland Philadelphia Corp., is a military version of the Leonardo TH-119. The TH-73A was procured by the Navy to replace the Bell TH-57 Sea Ranger with the role of training rotary-wing and tilt-rotor pilots for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The TH-73A was first delivered to TAW-5 in August 2021 and began training pilots in September 2022.

The Navy has ordered a total of 130 TH-73As. The Thrasher fleet is expected to complete replacement of the TH-57B/C during fiscal 2025 and serve through 2050, according to the Navy.

Kratos Defense Celebrates 200th Launch of BQM-177A in Support of U.S. Navy Exercises



May 28, 2024 at 8:00 AM EDT

SAN DIEGO – Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, Inc. , a technology company in the defense, national security and global markets and provider of high-performance, jet-powered unmanned aerial systems, announced that on Tuesday, April 2, the Kratos BQM-177A flew in support of the U.S. Navy's AIM-9X mission at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California. This event marked the 200th launch of the BQM-177A by Pacific Target and Marine Operations (PTMO) and resulted in the successful completion of the exercise.

The BQM-177A is the U.S. Navy's next-generation Sub-Sonic Aerial Target (SSAT). While it provides formidable threat emulation for air-to-air engagements, the BQM-177A's aerodynamic design and unmatched performance capabilities make it the best choice for highly dynamic, high-subsonic, sea-skimming anti-ship cruise missile threat emulation.

Capable of speeds in excess of 0.95 Mach and a sea-skimming altitude as low as 6.6 feet, the BQM-177A has no equal when it comes to delivering realistic anti-ship missile threat emulation.

This highly versatile aerial target supports a variety of mission requirements by carrying a wide array of internal and external payloads, including proximity scoring, Identification Friend or Foe (IFF), passive and active RF augmentation, electronic countermeasures, infrared (IR) augmentation (plume

Pods), chaff and flare dispensers, and towed targets.

Steve Fendley, President of Kratos Unmanned Systems Division, said about the program's bicentennial milestone, "Because of its high-performance capabilities and demonstrated reliability, the BQM-177A has proven to play a crucial role in the training of today's warfighters. With a global shift toward the use of drones in military applications, this platform is only becoming more relevant in the unmanned landscape of today's battlefield. The 200th launch is an indicator of just how valuable the 177 is to executing the Navy's objectives, and I am very proud of the role we have to play in preparing our nation's warfighting personnel to be ready for what's next."

Acknowledging this significant program milestone, Greg Crewse, Program Manager for the Navy's Aerial Targets Program Office (PMA-208), said, "The 200th launch of the BQM-177A is a significant achievement that reflects the dedication and skill of our collective team. We are committed to supporting our warfighters' need for next-generation target threat capability and are excited to continue improving aerial target systems to ensure that our Navy is ready for any challenge."

Cubic Awarded NAVAIR Contract to Provide Secure Live Virtual and Constructive Advanced Training Environment

(SLATE)

From Cubic Defense, 29 May 2024

SAN DIEGO – [Cubic Defense](#), the world's leading provider of advanced air combat training, is awarded a contract modification with Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) to provide engineering support services for a demonstration in Guam, Valiant Shield '24.

"Cubic's SLATE technology injects synthetic entities and computer-generated forces to bring the realism of the pacing multi-domain high-end threat environment to the live cockpits and operator consoles," said Paul K. Averna, VP and GM, Advanced Training Solutions for Cubic Defense. "Tomorrow's fight will be different, and our Joint and Coalition operators deserve a fully vetted system that ensures combat readiness today."

29 May Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, May 29, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 8:40 p.m. (Sanaa time) May 28, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed two missile launchers in an Iranian-backed Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

Separately, at approximately 11:30 p.m. (Sanaa time) on May 28, Iranian-backed Houthis launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S.,

coalition, or commercial ships.

The following day, between 1:26 and 1:38 a.m. (Sanaa time) on May 29, USCENTCOM forces successfully destroyed two uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) over the Red Sea launched from an Iranian-backed Houthi controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these missiles and systems presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure.

F-35B Crashes in New Mexico En Route Test Assignment



ATLANTIC OCEAN (Oct. 18, 2023) U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Alex Horne, assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23, conducts flight operations from the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales (R09) in the Atlantic Ocean, Oct. 18, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Kyra Helwick)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – An F-35B Lightning II strike fighter crashed shortly after takeoff from Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, on May 28. The pilot ejected and was hospitalized with serious injuries.

The Marine Corps F-35B was en route to deliver to Edwards Air Force Base, California, for assignment to test duties. The aircraft was flying from the Lockheed Martin factory in Fort Worth, Texas, for delivery to Edwards.

According to press reports, the pilot was an Air Force officer assigned to the Defense Contract Management Agency's Fort Worth office.

Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One, headquartered at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, has a detachment at Edwards Air Force Base for F-35 test and evaluation.

Rep. Rob Wittman, chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee issued a statement on the mishap:

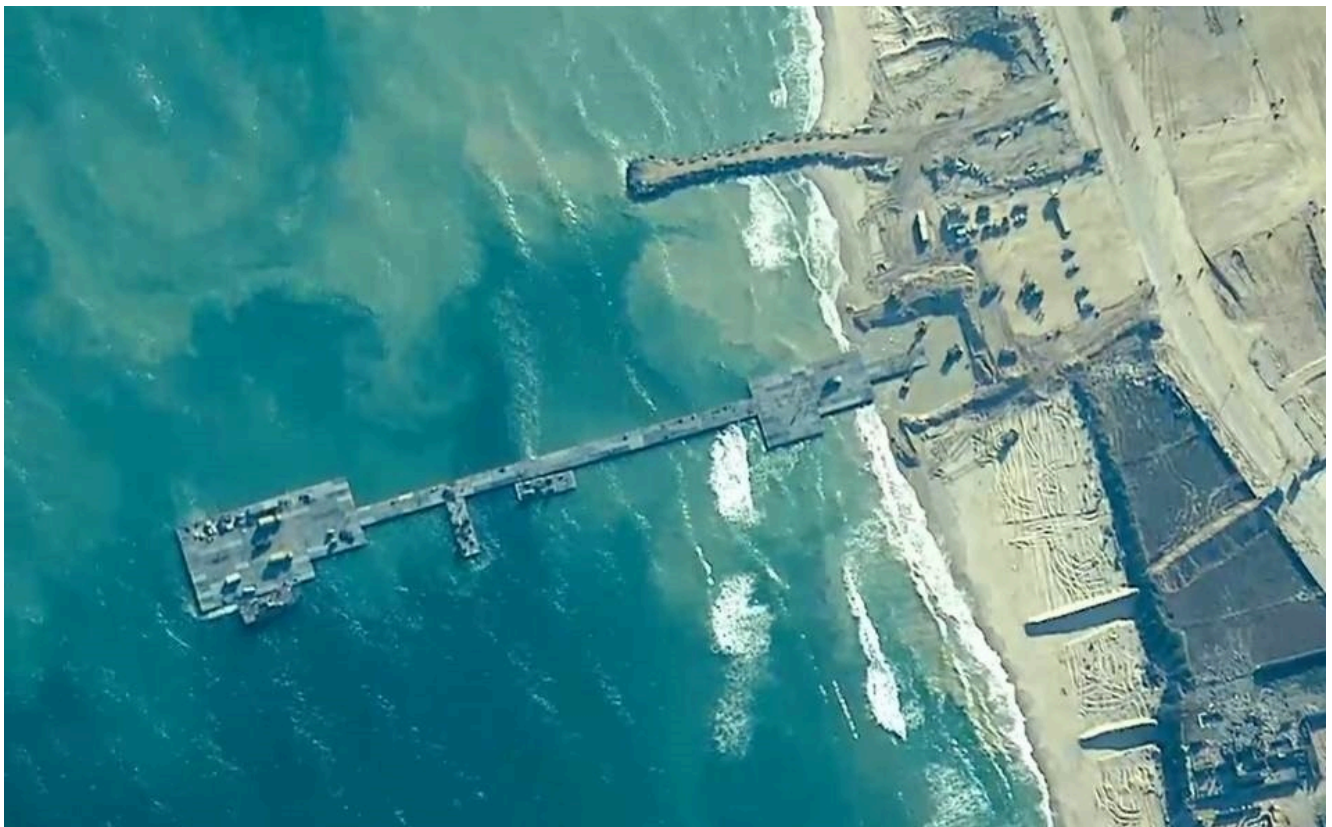
“I am incredibly grateful to the first responders who promptly aided the pilot after this crash and relieved to hear the pilot is in stable condition. I am praying for the pilot and their family as they undergo treatment for serious injuries.

“Any crash of our military aircraft is of utmost concern. While we know that expanding F-35 test capacity is the first step to fundamental F-35 transformation, this incident exacerbates the already urgent need to expand it. That's why I authored an amendment in this year's National Defense

Authorization Act to increase F-35 test capacity by 50%, ensuring that the U.S. military can accelerate tests associated with our nation's largest defense acquisition program.

"This incident will undoubtedly cause a technical setback for F-35 modernization and warrants an extensive and thorough investigation to determine the exact cause of this crash."

Defense Department Conducts Recover, Repair Mission for Temporary Pier After Heavy Sea States



May 28, 2024 | By Matthew Olay, DOD News

The Defense Department is working to recover three of four vessels associated with its temporary humanitarian aid pier in Gaza after rough seas caused the motorized sections to run aground May 25, the Pentagon announced today.

The vessels, which are part of U.S. Central Command's Joint Logistics, Over-the-Shore capability – and which are used to stabilize the trident pier – broke free from their anchors and beached ashore after suffering a loss of power, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters.

“As of today, one of the Army vessels that was beached on the coast of Israel near Ashkelon has been recovered. The second vessel that was also beached near Ashkelon will be recovered in the next 24 hours, and the remaining two vessels that were beached near the Trident pier are expected to be recovered in the next 48 hours,” Singh said, adding that the Israeli Navy is assisting in the recovery efforts.

The U.S is not authorizing any American boots on the ground in Gaza, and that is not hindering efforts to recover the three vessels, Singh said.

In addition to the JLOTS vessels running aground, high sea states and a North African weather system caused a portion of the trident pier to detach from the pier that is currently anchored into the Gaza coastline earlier today, resulting in damage to the trident pier and necessitating a need to rebuild and repair it, Singh said.

Over the next 48 hours, U.S. forces will remove the pier from its anchored position on the coast and tow it back to the Israeli coastal city of Ashdod to begin repairs.

“The pier proved highly valuable in delivering aid to the people of Gaza. Thus, upon completion of the pier repair and reassembly, the intention is to re-anchor the temporary pier to the coast of Gaza and resume humanitarian aid to the people who need it most,” Singh told reporters, noting that, to date,

over 1,000 metric tons of aid has been delivered to the pier for humanitarian organizations to distribute to Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Singh said, U.S. forces are currently loading humanitarian aid into vessels in Cyprus for transport to Gaza so that it can roll out immediately once the repaired pier is reattached to the shoreline in the coming days.

First announced March 8 of this year after President Joe Biden called on the military to lead the temporary humanitarian aid operation, the JLOTS pier became operational May 17.

When questioned as to whether the pier is durable enough to complete its mission, Singh said DOD is optimistic.

“I think, unfortunately, we had a perfect storm of high sea states and ... this North African weather system also came in at the same time, creating not an optimal environment to operate the JLOTS,” Singh said.

“But we believe that – given the time of year – we will be able to re-anchor this pier; and it will be able to be operational; and, hopefully, weather conditions won’t hinder it anymore.”

When further pressed as to whether the pier, which is budgeted at roughly \$300 million, is worth the cost, Singh reiterated how much aid the pier was able to get into Gaza in just a short period of time.

“... t’s pretty important for the people that are suffering right now – that are in a dire humanitarian situation – to get whatever aid they can, by whatever means,” Singh said.

“We want to do everything possible to help; and it is our forces – our men and women – who are running toward the problem and doing everything they can to find a solution.”

Centcom anticipates repairs to the pier to take approximately

one week.

Coast Guard Cutters Sea Dog, Sea Dragon Decommissioned in St. Marys, Georgia



Coast Guard members salute during the playing of the national anthem during a decommissioning ceremony for the Coast Guard Cutters Sea Dog and Sea Dragon in St. Marys, Georgia, May 29, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Ryan Dickinson)

U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, May 29, 2024

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Coast Guard decommissioned the U.S. Coast Guard cutters Sea Dog (WPB 87373) and Sea Dragon (WPB

87367), Wednesday, during a ceremony in St. Marys, Georgia.

Rear Adm. Douglas M. Schofield, Coast Guard District Seven commander, presided over the ceremony honoring the years of service the Sea Dog and Sea Dragon provided to the nation.

The Sea Dog and Sea Dragon were 87-foot marine protector-class cutters assigned to Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay in the Coast Guard's Seventh District.

Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay is designed to support the Navy's efforts to provide anti-terrorism and force protection for its Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines and to assist in meeting its Presidential mandates for ballistic weapon security.

The Sea Dragon was commissioned in January 2008 and the Sea Dog was commissioned in July 2009.

"The men and women of the cutters Sea Dog and Sea Dragon, past and present, have exemplified unwavering professionalism and dedication, safeguarding our nation's waters and supporting critical defense missions," said Capt. David Vicks, commanding officer of Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay. "I extend my profound gratitude to these courageous crews as we honor their steadfast service."

Following the decommissioning ceremony, the cutters will be transferred to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point.

The Coast Guard cutters Sea Devil (WPB 87368) and Sea Fox (WPB 87374) have relocated from Bangor, Washington, to replace the Sea Dog and Sea Dragon.

Red Sea Update

Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, May28, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 12:05 p.m. and 1:40 p.m. (Sanaa time) May 28, Iranian-backed Houthis launched five anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Red Sea. M/V Laax, a Marshall Island flagged, Greek owned and operated bulk carrier, reported being struck by three of the missiles, but continued its voyage. There were no injuries reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

Separately, between 10:04 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. (Sanaa time), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed five uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) over the Red Sea, launched from an Iranian-backed Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined the systems presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

Coast Guard Crew Offloads \$468 Million Worth of Cocaine in San Diego



From U.S. Coast Guard 11th District, May 28, 2024

SAN DIEGO – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) offloaded approximately 33,768 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated value of \$468 million, on Tuesday in San Diego.

The offload is a result of eight separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions or events off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America by the Coast Guard Cutter Munro in February and March.

USCGC Munro – 1,790 kg (3,946 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 21, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,725 kg (3,803 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 24, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,410 kg (3,108 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 26, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 2,136 kg (4,709 lbs) cocaine (March 10, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 3,562 kg (7,852 lbs) cocaine (March 17, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,289 kg (2,841 lbs) cocaine (March 18, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1, 289 kg (2,841 lbs) cocaine (March 18, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 2,170 kg (4,784 lbs) cocaine (March 23, 2024)

“The crew put in an incredible amount of work over very long hours, and I couldn’t be prouder of them,” said Capt. Rula Deisher, commanding officer, Coast Guard Cutter Munro. “Their dedication and grit goes to show that Munro is one of the best national security cutters in the fleet, and we are committed to keeping the country safe by stopping illegal drugs before they hit the street. There isn’t a better crew to serve with and I’m honored to have spent my final patrol with them.”

Multiple U.S. agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security, collaborate 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, all play a role in counter-narcotic operations. The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection and monitoring to interdictions and criminal prosecutions.

“I am extremely proud of this crew and their dedication to disrupting organized crime in the Eastern Pacific,” said Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto, commander, Coast Guard District 11. “The effort put in while interdicting more than 33,000 lbs of cocaine in a few weeks’ time is unparalleled. We will continue our commitment to stopping these criminals and the vast amounts of drugs they attempt to bring into our country.”

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection, monitoring and interdictions to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is

conducted under the authority of the Eleventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda, Calif. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) designated investigations. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

The Coast Guard Cutter Munro is the sixth Legend Class National Security Cutter, and is homeported in Alameda, Calif.

Common deployments include the entire Pacific Rim with port calls that may include San Diego, Kodiak, and Honolulu. Foreign destinations include countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Japan and all of the Pacific Island Nations.

The Coast Guard Cutter Munro's crew can operate in the most demanding open ocean environments, including the hazardous fisheries of the North Pacific and the vast approaches of the Southern Pacific, where significant narcotics trafficking occurs.

Austin: New Officers Ready to

Lead in Complex World



May 24, 2024 | By Jim Garamone, DOD News

Even as new Navy ensigns and Marine Corps second lieutenants were being commissioned at the U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Central Command issued a release on the latest threat to mariners in the Red Sea.

“At approximately 7:26 a.m. on May 23, Iranian-backed Houthis launched two antiship, ballistic missiles into the Red Sea,” the Centcom release said. “There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition or commercial ships. This continued malign and reckless behavior by the Iranian-backed Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.”

This is just one of the threats that the new officers will confront as they begin their military careers. It’s an example of the challenges these young officers must face as they join

the ranks.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III told the graduating service members in Annapolis, Maryland, that their experiences at the Naval Academy have made them ready to confront the challenges of the future.

“I hope that you will see your years here as a long lesson in grit, adaptability and discipline,” the secretary said. “You put in the ‘reps and sets’ to succeed as a team and grow as teammates. And that’s what we’ll continue to expect of you – today and every day.

“The United States has the most capable Navy and Marine Corps in the world. ... And make no mistake, we’re going to keep it that way. And you’re going to keep it that way.”

The graduating class arrived at the academy at the height of the COVID-19 epidemic. They had to adapt to a new learning situation and new procedures in order to graduate. “You have lived by your class motto: ‘*From Adversity, Victory*’,” Austin said. “And during a once-in-a-generation pandemic, that’s exactly what you showed.”

This is the second year in a row that Austin, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, has officiated at the Naval Academy’s graduation. “Last year, I told the class of 2023 that they would learn that the lifeblood of the rules-based international order is actually seawater,” he said. “And over the past year, we’ve seen how important your mission is. Sea power is a beacon projecting American power and American principles to the world. Our allies and partners depend on it, and our foes and rivals envy it.”

The Navy and Marine Corps are upholding U.S. principles from the South China Sea to the Red Sea. Austin said the United States is seeing new challenges to the open world of rules, rights and responsibilities built with U.S. leadership after

World War II. "In times like these, freedom of navigation rides on the bow waves of U.S. Navy ships," he said. "As officers, you will help us increase American security and model American values worldwide. Our sailors and Marines let the U.S. military project power anywhere on Earth."

The new ensigns and second lieutenants will join the services working to "secure the world's sea lanes for the free flow of ships, commerce and ideas," Austin said. "We're depending on you to sail, fly and operate wherever international law allows. We're depending on you to deepen old alliances and forge new friendships. And we're depending on you to deter conflict and to keep the peace."

Yes, the new officers must be prepared for war, but they must do more. Austin quoted Navy Adm. Arleigh Burke, who in 1961 said that Navy officers must "understand not only how to fight a war, but how to use the tremendous power which they operate to sustain a world of liberty and justice."

"And you will be tested. Just ask last year's graduates," the secretary said.

The secretary spoke with ensigns of the class of 2023 who are aboard the USS Carney. "They helped defend freedom of navigation in the Red Sea," he said. "They helped those in distress at sea. They helped degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia. And they helped shoot down missiles and UAVs . In fact, the Carney conducted 51 engagements in six months, which is the most direct Navy engagement with a foe since [World War II](#)."

"And the message of those ensigns on the Carney to the class of 2024 is this: You are ready."

The secretary said they will lead sailors and Marines through tension and uncertainty.