# SECNAV Names Future America-class Amphibious Assault Ship USS Helmand Province


From SECNAV Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that a future America-class amphibious assault ship will be named USS Helmand Province (LHA 10). Secretary Del Toro made the announcement, today, during the final day of Modern Day Marine 2024 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

The future USS Helmand Province commemorates the multiple U.S. Marine Corps operations that took place in Afghanistan's Helmand Province as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S.

sailing ships, or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II.  Secretary Del Toro named LHA 9, the future USS Fallujah, in 2022.

“In keeping with naval tradition of naming our Navy’s amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, I am honored to announce today that the future LHA-10 will be named USS Helmand Province,” said Secretary Del Toro. “Recognizing the bravery and sacrifice of our Marines and Sailors who fought for almost 20 years in the mountains of Afghanistan.”

Initiating the first U.S. ground offensive of OEF, on Oct. 19, 2001, helicopters launched from USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) lifted Task Force Sword (FT-11) to Objective Rhino, a remote airstrip in Helmand Province. Following the airstrip’s seizure, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) arrived on Nov. 25, 2001 to establish Camp Rhino. It was one of the longest ship-to-shore amphibious operations in history. Elements of the 26th MEU (Special Operations Command) subsequently reinforced the 15th MEU on Dec. 4, 2001. Afterward, Marine presence in Helmand remained constant, though minimal. On April 29, 2008, the 24th MEU stormed Taliban-held Garmser, then staged into southern Helmand on June 1, 2008. With allied support, the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade launched Operation Strike of the Sword on July 2, 2009. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines later conducted operation Sangin Moshtrarak Naweed in May 2012. This was one of OEF’s largest air assault operations. By 2013, with relative regional stability secured, Marines trained Afghan forces to maintain security in advance of the late 2014 drawdown.

“For Marines, Helmand Province is a place of bittersweet memories,” said Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith. “An entire generation of Marines wrote another chapter in the storied history of our Corps there, as warriors, but also as peacebuilders. Their legacy is defined by the spirit they embodied and the lives they touched. I look forward to

the day when the USS Helmand Province will steam forward and carry Marines on their way to write new chapters—in peace, and if called, in war."

Along with the ship's name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS Helmand Province as Mrs. Trish Smith, the spouse of Gen. Smith. She is an active volunteer for Marine Corps programs, including the Cornerstone Program, and Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (LINKS) program. She is an advocate and mentor for military families. In her role as sponsor, Trish Smith will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

"Sponsoring the USS Helmand Province is an honor beyond words," said Trish Smith. "I am looking forward to a lifelong relationship with the ship's leaders, but more importantly, with the generations of Marines, Sailors, and their families that she will carry abroad. Together, we will forever carry the memories of those who served in Helmand."

During his remarks, Secretary Del Toro reiterated that Marines on naval vessels, such as the future USS Helmand Province, are building relationships with our allies and partners in support of integrated deterrence. The Marine Corps remains focused on modernizing to fight and win against current and future threats in any clime and place.

"The work we ask our Marines and Sailors to do every day is anything but ordinary or routine, and in many cases extremely dangerous. It is incumbent upon all of us, including government and industry, to leverage every resource at our disposal to ensure our Marines have what they need to be successful in their assigned missions and return home safely to their loved ones," said Secretary Del Toro.

America-class amphibious assault ships are designed to support Marine Corps Operational Maneuver From the Sea and Ship to

Objective Maneuvers. The America-class ships replaced all of the decommissioned Tarawa-class LHAs and are now optimized for aviation ability, accommodating the Marine Corps' future Air Combat Element while adding additional aviation maintenance capabilities and increasing fuel capacities, and extra cargo storage. With the unique inherent powers of the amphibious assault ships, they are often called upon to also support humanitarian and other contingency missions upon short notice.

More information on amphibious assault ships can be found here.

Modern Day Marine is an annual trade show and exposition which showcases the latest innovations and technologies in military equipment, weapons, and gear and is primarily aimed at U.S. Marines and defense industry representatives. The show provides a forum for Marine Corps leaders to collaborate with our industry partners, Congressional stakeholders, and Department of Defense leadership on current and future initiatives. Engagements during the expo are intended to reinforce existing programs and priorities and set conditions for future initiatives.

---

# KONGSBERG turret delivers firepower to U.S. Marine Corps' ACV-30

From Kongsberg Aerospace & Defense, April 30, 2024

A new Amphibious Combat Vehicle that is undergoing testing by the U.S. Marine Corps includes a PROTECTOR remote turret (RT-20) from Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace.

BAE Systems delivered the first production representative test vehicle (PRTV) of the new Amphibious Combat Vehicle 30mm Cannon (ACV-30) to the customer earlier this year.  ACV-30 is the third variant in the ACV family of vehicles designed, developed, and built since BAE Systems was selected as the prime contractor for the program in 2018.

“We are proud to be working with BAE Systems and partners on a vehicle and weapon system that will increase the USMC firepower and the capacity to the Marines. The PROTECTOR RT-20 is a modern remotely operated turret with highly accurate firepower for wheeled, tracked, and robotic combat vehicles. The modularity and digitalization of the system has growth potential to incorporate new technologies to deter and defeat future threats,” said Jørgen Bull, Vice President, land

systems at Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace.

The vehicle mounts a stabilized, medium caliber Remote Turret System manufactured by KONGSBERG that provides the lethality and protection Marines need while leaving ample room for troop capacity and payload while keeping the crew under armor.

The remote turret eliminates the space requirement of legacy turreted cannon systems and provides more room to transport troops and associated mission essential equipment and reduces weight for better mobility.

BAE Systems' customizable ACV variants provide true open-ocean and ship-to-objective capability, land mobility, survivability, and growth potential to meet the evolving operational needs of Marines around the world.

"Delivering capability like the ACV-30 to the U.S. Marine Corps remains critical in the ever-changing battle space," said Garrett Lacaillade, vice president of the amphibious vehicles product line for BAE Systems. "The collaboration we have with Kongsberg on this PRTV enables our customer to see and test a modern and lethal firepower technology on the battlefield."

---

# Kaman's KARGO UAV Makes First Flight


From Kaman Air Vehicles

BLOOMFIELD, Conn. – (BUSINESS WIRE)–April 30, 2024–Kaman Corporation proudly announces the significant achievement of the first flight of the full-scale KARGO UAV, a purpose-built, autonomous, expeditionary resupply vehicle. This milestone, which took place in December of 2023, signifies a major accomplishment in the ongoing flight test progression. The development of this medium-lift UAS, initiated in 2021 to address logistics needs for U. S. Marine Corps operations, is now well underway.

“It is difficult to describe the sense of satisfaction one feels when watching an aircraft take flight for the first time, and very few people get the opportunity to participate in something like this,” said Romin Dasmalchi, General Manager of KARGO UAV. “This team worked hard to get here, and the intensity continues as we look to move from prototyping to production,” he added. KARGO UAV is intended to support the U. S. Military, partners, allies, and commercial customers by providing affordable, reliable, and maintainable logistics

support in austere and maritime environments. The design leverages existing high-TRL components so that a suitable system could be deployed as soon as 2026.

Contributions from partners significantly aided the success of the KARGO UAV flight test. Near Earth Autonomy, Kaman's partner for the autonomy system based in Pittsburgh, PA, provided autonomy features on the KARGO UAV. The two companies had previously collaborated on the K-MAX unmanned system and had showcased an earlier version of the autonomy technology to the Marines in April 2021. The Alaska Center for UAS Integration, part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute, was key in facilitating KARGO UAV flight test operations.

KARGO UAV is currently competing under the Marines' Medium Autonomous Resupply Vehicle—Expeditionary Logistics (MARV-EL) program, which is managed by NAVAIR PMA-263 and culminates in a fly-off in July of this year.

---

# April 30 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command

April 30, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 1:52 p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 30, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed an uncrewed surface vessel (USV) in Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined the USV 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 for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

---

# Temporary Pier in Gaza on Track to Be Operational in May

Pier-building begins Construction of the floating JLOTS pier in the Mediterranean is underway. The pier will support USAID and humanitarian partners to receive and deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. U.S. Transportation Command and U.S. European Command support the movement of humanitarian aid. (Courtesy Photo)

April 29, 2024 | By Matthew Olay, DoD News

A temporary pier the Defense Department is constructing off the Gazan coast to deliver humanitarian aid is on track to establish initial operations soon, the Pentagon announced today.

“We’re scheduled on track to meet our goal of early May,” said Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh during a news media gathering.

DOD originally announced its mission to construct the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS, capability on March 8, with a goal of beginning initial delivery operations about 60 days from that date.

DOD officials announced on April 25 that construction of the pier had begun, and recent satellite imagery from Gaza’s coastline has shown construction activity in the area.

The components of the JLOTS include a floating pier, an approximately 1,800-foot-long causeway that will be attached to the shore, and a group of logistic support vessels and barges that will transport the aid from the pier to the causeway.

“Right now, you’re seeing construction of that floating, temporary pier, and then, you’ll start to see construction of the causeway,” Singh told reporters. “Eventually, that causeway will be … pushed into the coastline and secured by the .”

Since announcing the temporary pier would be used in the humanitarian aid mission, DOD officials have repeatedly emphasized that the IDF will provide force protection on and around the JLOTS. No U.S. boots will be on the ground as part of pier operations in Gaza.

“There is an integrated cell with the IDF and our U.S. military to ensure that there is deconfliction happening,” Singh said. “And that also helps with the coordination of

JLOTS and the pier itself. So, we are confident that we are in a good place.”

When the pier is completed, officials anticipate it will initially facilitate the delivery of an estimated 90 daily truckloads of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Once fully operational, that number should jump to about 150 truckloads, or roughly 2,000,000 meals per day.

---

# Navy Launches Talent Pipeline Expansion in Southern California

Representatives from the U.S. Navy and industry launched the Southern California Talent Pipeline Program in Newport Beach, California, April 26. The Southern California Talent Pipeline Program will engage hundreds of shipbuilding and ship sustainment suppliers across the region to create maritime-focused manufacturing pipelines that revitalize the defense workforce by addressing critical skill gaps.

By Team Submarine Public Affairs, April 30, 2024

WASHINGTON –The U.S. Navy's Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) program launched the Southern California Talent Pipeline Program in Newport Beach, California, April 26.

The Southern California Talent Pipeline Program will engage hundreds of shipbuilding and ship sustainment suppliers across the region to create maritime-focused manufacturing pipelines that revitalize the defense workforce by addressing critical skill gaps.

"The strength of the talent pipeline is as vital as any

capability of a submarine," said Program Executive Officer Undersea Warfare Systems Rear Adm. Todd Weeks and executive sponsor, Southern California Talent Pipeline Project. "The skilled tradespeople we need, whether welders, machinists, electricians, and more are the structural foundation that will allow us to build and maintain the world's most advanced submarines."

According to Weeks, over the next 10 years, the SIB will need more than 140,000 skilled employees to build and sustain the Navy's submarine fleet.

The Southern California launch aims to mirror prior Talent Pipeline Program (TPPs) in maritime centers of gravity in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Hampton Roads, Virginia; Long Island, New York; and Boston, Massachusetts.

The Navy and the nation's submarine industrial base are supporting the largest submarine recapitalization effort in nearly 50 years, driving a significant increase in demand across the industrial base. This launch – part of a continued effort to strengthen and expand the Nation's defense workforce – brought together partners from industry, academia, and leaders from the local community to create and sustain a talent pipeline that enables employers to re-capitalize their workforce through recruiting, hiring, training, and retention.

"As we launch this vital Training Pipeline here in Southern California, it's important to remember the Submarine Industrial Base isn't a robotic factory," said Weeks. "When we talk about the SIB, we're talking about the workforce. It is the people who are constructing the most advanced submarines in the world and initiatives like these are an investment in the growing workforce, in security, and in stability.

The SIB Program's TPPs have already proved successful in other

parts of the country. Since the first one launched in Pennsylvania in 2021, the five TPPs have supported over 300 small and medium maritime suppliers and facilitated the employment of more than 2,700 individuals.  Across the 2023-2024 academic year, the target includes more than 400 companies hiring approximately 3,500 individuals as part of these six TPPs.

---

# GA-ASI Delivers First MQ-9A Extended Range to USMC's VMUT-2

SAN DIEGO – 30 April 2024 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) celebrated the delivery of the first MQ-9A Extended Range (ER) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) to Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Training Squadron 2 (*VMUT–2*). The delivery of the MQ-9A ER on March 18, 2024, is part of the Marine Air-Ground

Task Force (MAGTF) Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Program, which ordered eight MQ-9A ER UAS as part of the ARES Indefinite-Delivery/Indefinite-Quantity (ID/IQ) contract.

“It’s exciting to make this first delivery to VMUT-2, which continues to build the relationship between GA-ASI, the USMC, and NAVAIR (Naval Air Systems Command),” said GA-ASI vice president of DoD Strategic Development Patrick Shortsleeve. “GA-ASI has been a contracted warfighting partner of the USMC for several years and VMUT-2’s ability to produce aircrews for the USMC is a tremendous advancement in the USMC’s organic capability.”

VMUT-2 is a UAS training squadron for the USMC based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, North Carolina.

The MQ-9A ER is designed with field-retrofittable capabilities such as wing-borne fuel pods and reinforced landing gear that extend the aircraft’s endurance to more than 30 hours while further increasing its operational flexibility. The aircraft provides long-endurance, persistent surveillance capabilities with Full-Motion Video and Synthetic Aperture Radar/Moving Target Indicator/Maritime Mode Radar. An extremely reliable aircraft, MQ-9A ER is equipped with a fault-tolerant flight control system and a triple-redundant avionics system architecture. It is engineered to meet and exceed manned aircraft reliability standards.

---

# April 29 Red Sea Update

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

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 10:00 a.m. and 5:20 p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 29, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired three anti-

ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) and three UAVs from Yemen into the Red Sea towards MV Cyclades, a Malta-flagged, Greece-owned vessel. Initial reports indicate there were no injuries and the vessel continued on its way.

Earlier, at 7:49 a.m., U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one Houthi launched airborne unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) on a flight path towards USS Philippine Sea and USS Laboon in the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damages reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

It was determined the UAV presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and 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.

---

# BlueHalo to Test C-UAS System on Marine Corps JLTV

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – BlueHalo will be testing its LOCUST Laser Weapon System on a U.S. Marine Corps Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV), the company's chief executive officer (CEO) said.

BlueHalo' s primary focus is on defeating Group1, 2, and 3 unmanned aerial systems (UAS), as well as counter-rocket and counter-mortar systems, said Jonathan Moneymaker, CEO of Blue Halo, in an interview with *Seapower*.

"As the foundation of P-HEL, BlueHalo's LOCUST Laser Weapon System (LWS) combines precision optical and laser hardware with advanced software, artificial intelligence (AI), and processing to enable and enhance the directed energy "kill chain," the company said in a release. "LOCUST LWS addresses the inherent need for mobility and quick deployment—tracking, identifying, and engaging of a wide variety of targets with its hard-kill high energy laser.

"We look at it from an integrated layered defense strategy," Moneymaker said. "Five years ago, we saw the evolution of drone warfare, today one of the fastest-evolving threat

vectors. We wanted to engage that from a variety of modalities. We offer solutions and products that range from passive detection in our Skyview product to RF detect-and-defeat in our Titan product, our LOCUST Laser Weapon System, expanding into more global C2 [command and control], and starting to expand into our next-gen kinetic interceptor.

As of April 2024, BlueHalo had delivered two P-HEL systems to the U.S. Army, which has deployed them to unspecified locations.

“It is most certainly [deployed] in areas of conflict,” Moneymaker said. “It’s real, it’s deployable, it’s reliable, and frankly needed to bring service members home.”

“We’re very proud to be the first operationally deployed [HEL] system,” Moneymaker said, noting that its system has surpassed operational 10,000 hours and that the customer having a system that “has finally reached a level of reliability that they’ve been looking for as they’ve been fielding these capabilities.”

He said that the next expansion would be a mobile high-energy laser weapon – on an infantry squad vehicle or a JLTV. The first mobile system was delivered in late March.

“The JLTV integration will be on the Marine Corps’ JLTV, so we’ve been working with all of the services as it relates to deployment of LOCUST,” he said. “We certainly have been having initial conversations with afloat Navy on how can we deploy these systems in the best configuration to counter some of the activity we’re seeing in the Red Sea.”

Moneymaker said he sees great potential in the “proven, ready [P-HEL] system” for naval use with its roll-on/roll-off capability.

The work for the Marine JLTV is through the Department of the Navy’s Ground-Based Air Defense program, as well as through

the Joint Capabilities Office and U.S. Army Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office (RCCTO).

Moneymaker said the LOCUST is very effective against a [drone] swarm, noting that the capability is part of the test criteria. The LOCUST uses Wizard artificial intelligence and machine learning for target identification and aimpoint recognition.

The P-HEL is powered by a generator or batteries, and the company is looking at how to tie the HEL into shipboard power.

The company's HEL is built primarily at the BlueHalo campus in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with work expanding to Huntsville, Alabama, and Rockville, Maryland. BlueHalo, headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, employs 2,400 workers and is approaching revenue of $1 billion annually. The company has other facilities in Dayton, Ohio, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

---

# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Anacapa Decommissioned after 34 Years of Service

From U.S. Coast Guard 13th District, April 29, 2024

SEATTLE – The Coast Guard decommissioned the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Anacapa (WPB 1335) during a ceremony, Friday, in Port Angeles, Washington.

Rear Adm. Charles Fosse, commander, Coast Guard 13th District, presided over the ceremony honoring the 34 years of service the Anacapa and its crews provided to the nation.

Commissioned in 1990, Anacapa was one of 49 Island-class cutters built in Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, Louisiana and was originally homeported in Petersburg, Alaska for more than three decades.

“The cutter Anacapa has been a reliable and highly effective presence in our nation’s coastal waters for more than 30 years, conducting life-saving missions, ensuring preservation of precious natural resources and contributing to national

security," said Fosse. "I want to thank the crew serving today, and all who served aboard Anacapa over these many years, for their dedication and service to our country."

While homeported in Port Angeles, the Anacapa successfully conducted numerous missions. Notably, in August 2022, the Anacapa rescued three people from a disabled sailboat and conducted an overnight tow of the vessel. Additionally, in April 2023, the Anacapa responded and assisted in the safe evacuation of 600 passengers when the Walla Walla ferry grounded in Rich Passage.

"Even though the Anacapa had a short stay in her Port Angeles home port after cutter Cuttyhunk was decommissioned, she filled the remainder of Coast Guard coverage needed in the Pacific Northwest," said Chief Warrant Officer Holly Campbell, Anacapa's commanding officer. "The crews of the Anacapa have held the highest standard of excellence in serving our area of responsibility with pride, professionalism and resiliency throughout their tours of duty. The Anacapa has stood the watch for 34 years of honorable service to our nation. Fair winds and following seas during your last voyage, Anacapa. Thank you for your service."

Following the decommissioning ceremony, the Anacapa will transit to the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland, and will be placed in the Cutter Transition Division.