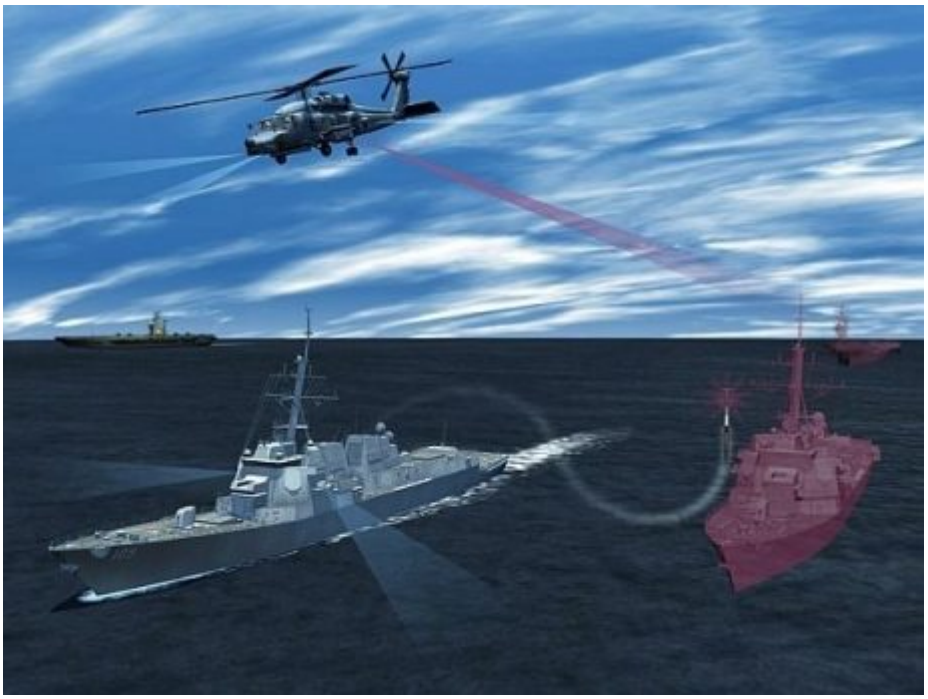
CAES Awarded LRIP2 Contract from Lockheed Martin to Support Navy's AOEW System



Release from CAES

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ARLINGTON, Va. – CAES has been awarded a Low-Rate Initial Production Phase 2 (LRIP-2) contract from Lockheed Martin Corporation to supply its Phased Array Antennas to support Lockheed Martin's Advanced Off-Board Electronic Warfare (AOEW) system, CAES announced in a Jan. 5 release. The announcement follows LRIP-1 contract that CAES was awarded earlier this year.

"We're honored to continue our work with Lockheed Martin to bring critical electronic warfare capabilities to the U.S. Navy," said Mike Kahn, CAES president and CEO. "Our unique combination of longstanding RF experience and next generation electronic warfare technology allows us to continue to be a trusted partner of choice."

The AOEW program delivers electronic surveillance and attack capabilities for U.S. Navy Ships. The AOEW system is a helicopter-borne pod that has the ability to work independently or with the ship's onboard electronic surveillance sensor, AN/SLQ-32(V)6, which also features CAES Antennas. The AOEW can be carried aloft by Navy MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopters.

U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) to Converge in Washington

U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) are converging in Washington for a conference January 9-12. The conference, known as a "Re-Blue," is coordinated and hosted by the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC), who leads the Surface Warfare WTI program.

Trained and Qualified Instructors

WTIs are highly trained and qualified surface warfare officers who have specialized knowledge and expertise in one of the warfighting areas of integrated air and missile defense (IAMD): anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare (ASW/ASUW), mine warfare (MIW), and amphibious warfare (AMW). WTIs provide their commanding officers with tactical expertise and provide advanced training to warfighting teams.

About 130 WTIs are expected to participate.

Leadership, Technology, and Skills

While at the Pentagon, the WTIs will hear keynote remarks from leadership across the surface force, have an opportunity to refresh their knowledge on updated tactics, and receive briefings on best practices from SWMDC's flagship underway training, SWATT – Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training.

The conference is taking place with the Surface Navy Association's 35th Annual Symposium in nearby Crystal City, Va., allowing the WTIs to hear from Navy and Marine Corps leaders and see the latest in products and technologies from exhibiting companies.

"Our WTIs are assigned across the fleet in various shore and afloat billets, some as the only WTI at a command," said Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, SMWDC Commander. "I'm looking forward to giving everyone the opportunity to come together with the greater WTI cadre, refresh their knowledge on the latest in surface tactics, and at the same time offer them the opportunity to attend SNA's Annual Symposium."

Maintaining a Competitive Edge

WTIs help maintain the competitive edge of the surface fleet and are the foundation of SMWDC's five lines of efforts:

- Warfare tactic instructor production
- Advanced tactical training
- Doctrine and tactical guidance development
- Operation support to combatant commanders, numbered fleet commanders, and task force commanders
- Capability assessments, experimentation, and future requirements

The program is open to all qualified surface warfare officers in paygrades O1 to O4. Chief warrant officers and limited duty officers may also apply to the program.

USCGC Frederick Hatch Completes Expeditionary Patrol in Oceania

Story by Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir, U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia

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SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) completed a 41-day 7100-nautical mile expeditionary patrol throughout Oceania on Dec. 23, U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia / Sector Guam said in a Jan. 6 release.

Under Operations Rematau and Blue Pacific, this patrol countered illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the exclusive economic zones of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Nauru by enforcing applicable laws, regulations, and individual countries' sovereignty. The crew strengthened partnerships through established bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements, shiprider operations, subject matter exchanges, and community engagements.

"This patrol exemplified the operational advantage the Fast Response Cutter provides the Coast Guard in Oceania, displaying our ability to successfully complete fisheries enforcement and search and rescue missions over 1,800 nautical miles from home. Mixed with fantastic port calls and impactful community relations events, the last 41 days were a testament to the Hatch crew's adaptability and diligence that made this patrol so successful. It has been an honor to sail with each of them. Making it home for Christmas is a great reward, especially after being away for Thanksgiving," said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, USCGC Frederick Hatch's commanding officer.

The crew hosted students from high schools and colleges as well as community members during their port calls to share the missions of the U.S. Coast Guard and provide a look at the ship itself. They also participated in local sporting events and cultural activities. When departing the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the team took on an additional temporary crewmember, Staff Sgt. Gary Likiak, U.S. Army, and part of the local embassy team. Likiak rode along to Kosrae, which is also home for him – the first time he's been home in six years.

"Reinvigorating our bi-lateral agreements with our partners in the region after COVID-19 was the main objective of this patrol, and our successes with shipriders aboard and warm hospitality received at each island both allowed us to achieve this goal," said Dreiss.

Of note, on this patrol, the Frederick Hatch team hosted shipriders from the maritime enforcement branches of the FSM, RMI, and Nauru governments. This activity was the first time shipriders could accompany U.S. Coast Guard crews in several years as Pacific Island partners resume normal operations after limiting travel as a COVID precaution.

The team conducted 16 boardings, issued five warnings, and found no significant violations. The fishing vessels were tuna longliners and purse seiners.

On Dec. 17, the Frederick Hatch crew, after departing Kosrae, enacted the newly expanded agreement for maritime law enforcement operations, conducting two boardings on licensed fishing vessels operating in the FSM exclusive economic zone.

“It was very fulfilling to have an opportunity to enact the Expanded Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement for the first time after watching the program develop over the last year,” said Dreiss. “It provides the U.S. Coast Guard with another avenue to support our regional partners and continues to lay the groundwork for increasing Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing enforcement in the region.”

The expanded agreement builds on the existing bilateral shiprider agreement between the two countries. It establishes procedures for authorizing the U.S. to conduct maritime law enforcement boardings on behalf of FSM to combat illicit maritime activity when an FSM law enforcement officer is not present. More specifically, the agreement provides a coordinating mechanism and process for U.S. law enforcement personnel to work with the FSM National Police, Division of Border Control and Maritime Surveillance to receive approval from the FSM to act under the agreement.

“This was an excellent warm-up of our bilateral relations and fisheries enforcement process following COVID. It was great to have local experts with us again and provide services to our

FSM, RMI, and Nauru partners," said Capt. Nick Simmons, the commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. "The successful application of the expanded agreement now allows us to support our partners better. FSM occupies more than one million square miles of the Pacific Ocean and ranges 1,700 miles from West (Yap) to East (Kosrae) with the enforcement team in Pohnpei. This agreement allows us to help our partners overcome the logistics that limited enforcement in the past when it is difficult to get a shiprider out to the field."

The U.S. Coast Guard flags IUU-F as one of the top threats to oceans and a significant regional destabilizing factor. The United States continues to emphasize the ocean's health and good governance, as evidenced by expanded measures to combat illegal fishing in the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act. Notable items include an expanded High Seas Drift Net Act, improvements to NOAA's Seafood Import Monitoring Program, programs aimed at reducing the impacts of ships and other vessels on marine mammals, and a federal ban on buying or selling shark fins in the U.S.

The U.S. Coast Guard regularly exercises 11 bilateral fisheries law enforcement agreements on behalf of the United States with countries throughout the Pacific islands. Shiprider agreements allow maritime law enforcement officers to observe, board, and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within a designated EEZ or on the high seas. These law enforcement activities bolster maritime law enforcement operations and maritime domain awareness and provide a mechanism to conduct integrated operations within the Pacific. This expanded agreement is the first of its kind. It seeks to overcome the challenges of the Oceania region's vast distances while leveraging limited enforcement resources and the trust built between nations over decades.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains strong partnerships with the maritime forces in the region through extensive training and

subject matter expert exchanges. FSM, also known as the Big Ocean State, has one of the world's largest EEZs, with waters rich in sea life. RMI, located halfway between Hawaii and Australia north of the equator, is an archipelago of 29 atolls, five low coral islands, and 1,151 islets that shares maritime borders with FSM, Kiribati, and Nauru.

RMI's exclusive economic zone of 1.2 million square kilometers (463,322 square miles). Nauru is the smallest island nation and the third smallest country in the world, with around 10,000 inhabitants. Fishing is essential to their food security. FSM and RMI are signatories to a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They are Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association members and party to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, as is Nauru.

In addition to fisheries enforcement, the Frederick Hatch crew conducted a search and rescue case medically evacuating a 31-year-old Vietnamese fisherman to a higher level of medical care in Pohnpei on Nov. 20.

The cutter's boarding team learned of the fisherman's injuries while conducting a bilateral fisheries boarding with an FSM Marine Police Officer aboard the fishing vessel Ocean Galaxy 195 nautical miles (224 statute miles) south of Pohnpei. The ship is a 69.4-meter (227-foot) purse seiner flagged out of Nauru. The fisherman reportedly fell 12 feet earlier the same day, sustaining a head and possible spinal injury. He was conscious and talking but lost feeling and motion in his right arm and both legs, exhibiting severe concussion symptoms.

"It was an absolute team effort by every member of Frederick Hatch to medevac the injured crewmember from the Ocean Galaxy successfully. Witnessing each crewmember perform at the highest level after completing two boardings earlier the same day to help a fellow mariner was awesome to watch," said Dreiss.

Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast Guard endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It recognizes the wisdom of the Pacific Island Forum leaders in that securing the future requires long-term vision and a carefully considered regional strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Op Rematau reinforces U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S. national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime governance and security.

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter and is named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. The Coast Guard commissioned the ship along with its sister ships, Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) and Oliver Henry (WPC 1140), in Guam in July 2021. These cutters are a vital part of the U.S. Coast Guard’s enduring regional presence serving the people of the Pacific by conducting 10 of the Service’s 11 statutory missions with a focus on search and rescue, defense readiness, living marine resources protection, and ensuring commerce through marine safety and ports, waterways, and coastal security.

7th Fleet Destroyer Conducts Transit of Taiwan Strait

[7th Fleet Destroyer Conducts Transit of Taiwan Strait]

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TAIWAN STRAIT – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Chung-Hoon (DDG 93) conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit Jan. 5 (local time) through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a Jan. 5 release.

“The ship transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal State. Chung-Hoon’s transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States’ commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” the release said. “The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows.”

General Dynamics Land Systems Delivers Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle Prototype to U.S. Marine Corps

General Dynamics Land Systems Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle

STERLING HEIGHTS, Mich. – General Dynamics Land Systems, a business unit of General Dynamics, submitted its Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) prototype to the U.S. Marine Corps for evaluation in the service's ongoing competition, the company said in a release.

"We are proud to have delivered this transformational capability to the Marine Corps," said Gordon Stein, General Dynamics Land Systems vice president and general manager of U.S. operations. "Our purpose-built ARV prototype is the fruition of several years of research and development internally and in collaboration with the USMC. We can't wait for Marines to get their hands on this ARV and use it as their quarterback on the multi-domain battlefield."

General Dynamics Land Systems' ARV connects to an array of onboard and offboard sensors, uncrewed aerial vehicles, and will eventually include ground robotic systems.

Along with the ARV prototype, General Dynamics Land Systems also delivered a system integration lab, and a blast hull for survivability testing.

“We have continued to align with the Marine Corps’ 10-year transformational initiative, Force Design 2030, and our ARV capability furthers that objective,” said Phil Skuta, General Dynamics Land Systems director of strategy and business development for U.S. Marine Corps and Navy programs. “The ARV is highly mobile on land and in the water and will allow Marines to sense and communicate like never before. Our design also ensures growth margins and modular open architecture to rapidly incorporate new technology as it develops.”

Congress Orders Report on Plan for Future of Navy’s Expeditionary EA-18G Squadrons

A U.S. Navy EA-18G Growlers assigned to the “Garudas” Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 134, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, waits to receive air-to-air refueling from a Royal Air Force Voyager tanker assigned to 101 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton, United Kingdom, during a Red Flag-Nellis 22-1 mission Feb. 3, 2022, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Airman 1st Class Zachary Rufus*

ARLINGTON, Va. — Congress rejected the U.S. Navy’s 2023 budget proposal to deactivate five electronic attack squadrons (VAQs) that operate the Boeing EA-18G Growler electronic attack jet in the defense policy bill recently signed into law by President Joe Biden. Instead, Congress directed the Defense Department to submit a plan to meet the joint airborne attack requirements.

In its 2023 budget submission, the Navy proposed to deactivate its entire expeditionary VAQ force, which deploys to overseas bases in order to provide electronic attack capabilities to the joint force. The five expeditionary VAQ squadrons are separate from the Navy’s VAQ squadrons that deploy aboard aircraft carriers.

The five squadrons originally slated for cut included a total of 25 EA-18Gs, which would have been placed in storage at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona. The cuts also would have freed up approximately 1,020 officers and enlisted personnel. The Navy estimated the savings over the Future Years Defense Plan would be $807.8 million.

In the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Congress directed the Navy to retain all 160 EA-1G aircraft and required the following:

A report outlining a strategy and execution plan for the Navy and Air Force to continuously and effectively meet airborne electronic attack training and combat requirements of the joint force, to include establishment or continuation of one or more land-based, joint service electronic attack squadrons and integration of both active and reserve components of both services.

The Navy is the only provider of expeditionary electronic attack jets to the joint force. The Air Force retired its last EF-111A Raven jets in 1998, and the Marine Corps retired its last EA-6B Prowler tactical jets in 2019. The expeditionary VAQ squadrons have deployed to Southwest Asia, Japan, and Italy over the years in support of U.S. and coalition forces. Last year, one squadron – VAQ-134 – was deployed to the European Command as part of the build-up of forces in support NATO's eastern flank after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The expeditionary VAQ squadrons are considered high-demand/high-value assets by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Navy's five expeditionary VAQ squadrons are all based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington: VAQs 131, 132, 134, 135, and 138. The Navy's only reserve VAQ squadron, VAQ-209, has also been used in an expeditionary role.

The carrier-deployable VAQ squadrons are VAQs 130, 133, 136,

137, 139, 140, 141, 142, and VAQ-144, the latter established in October 2022. All are based at Whidbey Island, except for VAQ-141, which is based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, as part of the forward-deployed Carrier Air Wing Five for the USS Ronald Reagan.

French Warship Seizes Illegal Drugs in North Arabian Sea

MANAMA, Bahrain – A French warship seized illegal drugs worth a total estimated U.S. street value of $24 million from a fishing vessel transiting international waters in the North Arabian Sea, Dec. 27, Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs said in a Jan. 3 release.

French Marine Nationale frigate FS Guépratte (F714) was patrolling regional waters in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 when it seized 3,492 kilograms of hashish and 472

kilograms of heroin from the fishing vessel.

Led by the Royal Saudi Navy, CTF 150 is one of four task forces organized under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), the largest international naval partnership in the world consisting of 34 member-nations.

CMF has seized nearly $1 billion worth of illicit narcotics since 2021 while patrolling international waters in the Middle East.

Guépratte previously seized 271 kilograms of heroin from another fishing vessel while patrolling the Gulf of Oman in February 2022.

Cohesion at Sea: Maritime Deterrence and Defense throughout 2022

Naples, Italy – In the Baltic Sea, Estonian troops and U.S. Marines rehearse amphibious assault drills, storming the beach and quickly seizing objectives in concert as the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) patrols the horizon.

Farther south, in the Mediterranean Sea, a French Navy Rafale lands aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) during multicarrier operations comprising Bush, the FS Charles de Gaulle (R 91) Carrier Strike Group (CSG), and ITS Cavour (C-550) CSG.

In the Atlantic Ocean, the Officer of the Deck on the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) looks out at the Canadian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, and Spanish ships in company during Silent Wolverine, an exercise designed to test the carrier’s capabilities through integrated high-end naval warfare scenarios during its first overseas deployment.

Through combined evolutions like these, NATO Allied and partner maritime forces exhibited unparalleled cooperation and interoperability throughout 2022. From the High North to the Mediterranean, and in nearly every body of water in between, these navies and coast guards embarked on a banner year of sustained, uncompromising strength and vigilance throughout the European theater. Lt. Cmdr. Tyler Barker of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

“Our Allies and close partners like Finland and Sweden have never been more unified than we are today,” said Adm. Stuart Munsch, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) and commander, Allied Joint Force Command Naples. “Our interoperability at sea delivers true warfighting advantage for NATO, enabling the Alliance to deter and defend In the midst of armed conflict in Europe.”

The ships of the Harry S. Truman carrier strike group (HSTCSG), including the Royal Norwegian Navy frigate HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen (F310), kicked off 2022 with a bang and set the pace for the year to come with port visits to Cyprus, Greece, Spain, and Türkiye. Deployed to the NAVEUR-NAVAF area of operations in December 2021, the HSTCSG remained in the region until August 2022, flying hundreds of sorties in support of NATO’s enhanced Air Policing and other missions, safeguarding the integrity of Allied airspace before turning over these duties to the George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (GHWBCSG).

The HSTCSG, along with other Allied and partner maritime forces, came under NATO command and control for vigilance activities Neptune Strike 22.1 and Neptune Shield, in January and May, respectively. Neptune Strike 22.1 marked the first time since the Cold War NATO assumed command and control of a U.S. carrier strike group.

The GHWBCSG picked up where the HSTCSG left off, leading the way during Neptune Strike 22.2 in October, the eighth phase of the overall Project Neptune series, which includes named activities as well as vignettes within Allied strike group training events.

“The full integration into NATO of powerful Allied Carrier Strike and Expeditionary Strike Groups, and additional capabilities from across the Alliance, is a perfect example of our deter and defend strategy,” said Rear Adm. James Morley, deputy commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO). “We demonstrate through coordinated Vigilance Activities and routine operations just how closely national and Alliance military plans are aligned, as we exploit every opportunity to improve interoperability at sea, in the air, and on the ground, seamlessly aligning military effects with political objectives.”

This flexible command and control structure and rapid and seamless integration of Allied forces in multiple domains was a hallmark of NATO operations in 2022. Throughout the year, Allied strike groups, including those gathered around aircraft carriers Harry S. Truman, George H.W. Bush, Gerald R. Ford, FS Charles de Gaulle, ITS Cavour, HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08), and ESPS Juan Carlos I (L-61), validated NATO’s ability to coalesce credible combat power. Allied surface combatants routinely integrated into other nations’ strike groups, too, increasing the pace and scale of multinational strike group interchangeability.

While these strike groups ensured the integrity of European waters and airspace, Allied amphibious forces also enhanced their effectiveness, operating in a variety of climates and conditions, from Norwegian and Icelandic fjords to the sands of North Africa and to the rocky beaches and islands of the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. Though a series of bilateral and multinational exercises and training events, the Kearsarge

Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and embarked 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) sharpened their skills in joint and coalition amphibious evolutions as they bolstered trust and refined tactics with like-minded nations.

“Bringing the capability and expertise of the Kearsarge ARG-MEU into theater fostered relations with our counterparts in Europe and Africa and provided some of the best hands-on training our team could have hoped for,” said Capt. Aaron Kelley, commander, Kearsarge ARG and Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) Six. “A recurring theme our team took away from deployment is that our Allies and partners are incredibly proficient at what they do, and training together allows us to become stronger together.”

These evolutions paid dividends on all sides and laid a foundation for continued collective improvement in amphibious operations across the Alliance, all while demonstrating NATO’s resolve and commitment to the region. U.S. forces gained invaluable experience operating in European areas, while European Allies and partners honed their skills alongside their American counterparts.

“Exercises and operations with NATO nations, including USS Kearsarge ARG-22 MEU’s participation in the Estonian exercise Siil, are invaluable toward enhancing our overall capability,” said Commodore Jüri Saska, commander of the Estonian Navy. “All of our Allies and partners are committed to the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region, and we validate that commitment through our coordinated work together in the maritime domain.”

Numerous U.S., Allied, and partner surface combatants, including cruisers, destroyers, frigates and corvettes, delivered continuous presence throughout the region, whether sailing with a strike group, or independently. These warships, hailing from multiple nations, surface action groups, and

Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMG), manned the watch, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing unremitting vigilance across the continent. These ships joined an extensive array of bilateral and multinational exercises and operations, underscoring the versatility maritime forces supply to the Alliance.

“2022 has been a significant year in improving our maritime coordination with our many NATO Allies and partners,” said Vice Adm. Aurelio De Carolis, commander, Italian Naval Fleet Command. “Through our multinational exercise Mare Aperto, integration with Allied carrier strike groups, and routine operations with Allied units, we have shown the true power and proficiency of our combined maritime forces. We very much look forward to continuing the pace in 2023.”

As surface ships sailed the seas, maritime patrol aircraft, submarines, and special operations forces personnel provided continuous maritime domain awareness, furthering warfighting advantage and enhancing joint and coalition expertise. High in the skies, deep below the ocean surface, on land, and in the littorals, these units and personnel accomplished their missions with skill and precision.

In multi-domain operations, the ability to synthesize capabilities from such a wide variety of assets and mission areas is essential to overall success. Altogether, the Alliance has illustrated their unrivaled unity in the maritime domain as they continue to advance their interoperability and interchangeability.

“As NATO Allies face a complex and uncertain security environment in Europe, we face it together,” said Vice Adm. Thomas Ishee, Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and Commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO). “Through activities, exercises, and operations, our nations and commands prove every single day that NATO is the strongest

Alliance in the history of the world. We and our Allies and partners remain vigilant, operate professionally, and stand ready to defend our nations and our Alliance.”

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

Coast Guard Leverages Aviation Workhorse to Overcome Challenges in Cutter Logistics in Oceania

SANTA RITA, Guam – Guam is home to three 154-foot fast response cutters commissioned in 2021. These ships are built in Lockport, Louisiana. After initial workups, they sailed from Key West through the Panama Canal, more than 10,000 miles to Guam. In the time since the crews have stayed busy conducting the U.S. Coast Guard's core missions in Micronesia and supporting our Blue Pacific partners.

The Operations Area

For many of the Nation's fast response cutters, the transit to homeport from Key West is one of the most extended trips they make. Those stateside remain close to most essential services needed to maintain the vessels, designed to operate within 200 nautical miles of homeport. In the case of the Guam-based fleet, they routinely go more than 200 nautical miles to get to the operations area. U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam has one of the largest areas of responsibility of any sector at 1.9 million square miles. Like

its other overseas counterparts, the region can be austere and presents unique challenges.

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam (CGFM/SG) differs. The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) undertook a more than 6,000-mile expeditionary patrol south through Oceania with inaugural FRC port calls in Papua New Guinea and Australia. Its sister ship, the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143), just concluded a similar patrol in support of Operations Rematau and Blue Pacific, the southeast of Guam. The patrol countered illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing off the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Nauru by enforcing regulatory schemes and individual countries' sovereignty while strengthening partnerships through shiprider operations, subject matter exchanges, and community engagements.

"What often goes unsaid is the logistics piece enabling the operations," said Chief Warrant Officer Manny Pangelinan, engineering officer for CGFM/SG. The Oliver Henry required a last-minute shipment of fuel injectors while underway, a package coordinated by the CGFM/SG logistics department with some support from the Surface Force Logistics Center in Baltimore. The package was shipped via a commercial carrier and met them in Australia.

But more oversized items and hazardous materials can present a more complex challenge. Guam is a strategic location, and as a U.S. territory, it is the first line of defense against regional competitors. Logistically, it is remote and depends on maritime cargo for most items. Nearly 90 percent of imports come through the Port of Guam, and travel by sea varies in cost and takes time. Commercial air freight requires less time but can be very expensive.

The Logistics Challenge

Each FRC has four bottles of compressed gas onboard as part of the fire suppression system. The current design of the FRCs uses FN200 powder and nitrogen gas. Over time these bottles lose nitrogen and need to be recharged, the same as any fire extinguisher. If an extinguisher or system loses its prime, it may malfunction and not adequately suppress a fire. Stateside servicing this equipment is a simple endeavor, but service providers in Guam still need to be created. To further complicate matters, if a local provider converted existing equipment to service this system, it could only be used on FN200 to prevent cross-contamination. The U.S. Coast Guard is currently the only FN200 client on the island.

As the Frederick Hatch prepared for their patrol, the crew noted one of the four bottles was borderline between yellow and red on its pressure. No one wants to be over a thousand miles from shore, with a fire, and risk a system malfunction. But how do you get a 277-pound replacement bottle, considered a hazardous material, shipped from the mainland United States to the territory of Guam? And how do you do it in time to meet the ship’s schedule and enable the crew to fulfill their mission requirements in Micronesia? You keep it in-house and leverage the naval aviation community.

Coast Guard Aviation in Oceania

U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point in Hawaii conducts search and rescue, maritime domain awareness and surveillance, law enforcement, and cargo and transportation operations throughout Oceania. They are currently the only U.S. Coast Guard air station in the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, with the next closest aviation unit in California. Still, from 1947 until 1972, they operated an air detachment in Guam known as Naval Air Station Agana to provide LORAN support for Western Pacific stations.

Today, the Barbers Point team operates four MH-65 Dolphin helicopters and four HC-130 Hercules airplanes. The Hercules

airframes were recently upgraded from the H model to the J model. For Guam, this is significant. The J is more capable as a long-range surveillance aircraft providing heavy air transport and long-range maritime patrol capability. Each plane can serve as an on-scene command and control platform or as a surveillance platform with the means to detect, classify, and identify objects and share that information with operational forces. It also has "long legs." Where the H crews needed to stop for fuel en route to Guam from Hawaii, the J could make the trip in one leg if necessary. This advantage matters when time is of the essence, particularly in search and rescue cases.

Capt. John Rivers, CGAS Barbers Point commanding officer, recently visited Guam. He met with the CGFM/SG team to discuss options for more aviation support to Western and Central Pacific operations. Those ideas include more hours of Hercules activity in this region and possible use of the Dolphin helicopters outside Hawaii.

The Workhorse

Regarding transporting equipment, the aircrew, particularly the loadmaster, has the final say on what goes aboard the plane. The Barbers Point team and the loadmaster were crucial to keeping the Frederick Hatch on schedule.

The team flew the HC-130 Hercules CG 2009 to Sacramento to pick up the shipment of fire bottles, then returned to Hawaii to rest and refuel. Subsequently, they flew to Majuro and landed in Guam on Nov. 9 at the A.B. Won Pat Guam International Airport. The CGFM/SG engineering team and environmental contractors met them to further transport the bottles to the pier.

All told, the movement cost flight hours and personnel time – but that is the nature of logistics. Per Commandant Instruction 7310.1V Reimbursable Standard Rates, the inside

government rate for an HC-130J is $19,782 per hour. This includes Direct Costs like labor, employee benefits, fuel, maintenance, etc.; Support Costs: Costs allocated to a particular asset class for the support received from Coast Guard support activities, including but not limited to Area Commands, Districts, Sectors, Sector Field Offices, Bases, etc.; and General and Administrative: Costs allocated to a particular asset class to represent benefit received from Coast Guard general and administrative activities such as legal services, payroll processing, etc.

However, aircrews make the most out of every flight, coupling logistics with other missions and training whenever possible. Flight crews must also fly a certain number of monthly hours to maintain currency and proficiency.

The personnel hours, in this case, include the coordination and research by the CGFM/SG Engineering Team to enable the technician from the fire services company to come out, install and certify the new bottle. The team kept the cost down by more than $16,000 by flying out one technician instead of two and doing all the manual labor of removing and replacing the existing bottle with the ship’s force. Transporting a 277-pound bottle across the pier, onto the cutter, and into the space with a tripod and chain fall in 90-degree heat with 90 percent humidity is quite an undertaking. According to Reimbursable Standard Rates, the inside government cost of a CWO2 is $79 per hour, a Chief Petty Officer is $71, and a Petty Officer 2nd Class is $55. Still, these personnel, like the aircrew, are salaried. The figures come into play if the Service seeks reimbursement from another branch or outside entity for services. The outside government rate is higher.

One might ask how to avoid this challenge in the future, as this won’t be the last time these bottles need to be recharged. One possible alternative was building a facility to support the maintenance of these systems in Guam to the tune of more than a million dollars. Ultimately, this option was

deemed unrealistic. Instead of a new facility, the engineering team procured a larger bottle of FN200 and equipment to be kept onsite to recharge the FRCs' systems. The team will do the heavy lifting and fly out a technician for the final assembly and certification. Two complete sets of bottles were procured at the same time. The first set came aboard the Hercules, and the second will come by cargo ship at a fee of just under $4,000. However, as of Christmas, the second set of bottles are still in transit and will take around 75 days total to arrive, emphasizing the importance of the Engineering Team's efforts and choices.

Forecast

"This team continues to deliver on the Commandant's mandate to be creative and innovative to craft solutions to the challenges we face as a service," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of CGFM/SG. "I am impressed by their commitment and resolve to consistently deliver superior engineering support, keeping us operational in a remote environment."

In the Fiscal Year 2022, the three Guam-based FRCs spent 324 days away from homeport, with 243 of those days physically underway conducting missions at sea. The other days away from homeport account for port calls, community engagements, and maintenance away from the home station. They worked 25 patrols throughout the region, enforcing the rule of law and strengthening partnerships. Guam's sister sector in Honolulu also has three FRCs doing local and long-range missions. By comparison, they spent 202 days at sea for roughly the same number of patrols. This underscores the distances and demands Team Guam is covering.

"We have better platforms to help our crews get after the ever-growing mission demand here. But we must not lose sight of the demand on the crews and what is necessary to maintain our availability and effectiveness as a preferred partner in the region," said Simmons. "That means putting steel on

target, remaining flexible, and ensuring our crews have the support they need to succeed in a dynamic operational environment. I thank the CGAS Barbers Point team for ensuring our success and enabling the Frederick Hatch crew to work with our partners in Oceania and protect the Nation.”

This fire bottle transport is an excellent example of integrated logistics across the U.S. Coast Guard enterprise and innovation to find a timely cost-reasonable solution to keep the ship operational and on schedule. It is also a model for expanded Coast Guard aviation support to Guam.

Navy Orders Fourth Lot of TH-73A Thrasher Training Helicopters

ARLINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Navy has exercised a contract option to order a fourth lot of Leonardo TH-73A Thrasher training helicopters.

Leonardo said in a Dec. 24 release that it was awarded a $110 million firm, fixed-price contract modification through AgustaWestland Philadelphia Corp. for 26 TH-73As. The option will bring the total number of TH-73As ordered to 130, the Navy's program of record requirement.

The Navy previously ordered three lots of Thrashers: 32 for $176 million in January 2020; 36 for $171 million in November 2020; and 36 for $159.4 million in December 2021. The first order included "spares, support, dedicated equipment and specific pilot/maintenance training services," Leonardo said.

The TH-73As are replacing the Navy's three-decade-old TH-57B/C Sea Ranger training helicopters in Training Air Wing Five at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida. The helicopters are used to train rotary-wing pilots for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. The Thrasher will enable the services to meet

advanced rotary wing and intermediate tilt-rotor training requirements.

The TH-73A will develop pilot training and skills by using current cockpit technologies and a modernized training curriculum “that reflect the capabilities in the current Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard inventory,” the Navy said. “Using a skills-based approach to training with just-in-time methodology, incorporating modern technology, the TH-73A will ensure rotary wing aviators are produced at a higher quality, more efficiently, ready to meet the challenges faced in the fleet.”

The first twelve rotary wing students began training on the TH-73A in September 2022. The first of those students completed an inaugural solo flight in November 2022.

The helicopters will be built in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with an expected work completion date of December 2024.