Coast Guard Cutter Willow Completes Aids-to-Navigation Mission in Puerto Rico

Petty Officer 3rd Class Vincent Wassylenko, Coast Guard Cutter Willow buoy deck supervisor (wearing yellow safety hardhat in photo), prepares to set a relief hull in Mayaguez Bay, Puerto Rico Oct. 9, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Willow completed its scheduled aids to navigation service mission around Puerto Rico port and navigable waterways Oct. 17, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

During the eight-day mission, cutter Willow crewmembers serviced 23 aids to navigation and performed eight buoy hull reliefs around island ports and navigable waters in Arecibo, Culebra, Guanica, Guayanilla, Ponce, San Juan, Tallaboa and Vieques.

After the Coast Guard reopened all the ports in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Fiona, the cutter Willow moved up its itinerary to provide scheduled maintenance around the island and further inspect the status of the aids to navigation in the most affected areas from the hurricane.

“The crew and I were happy to be back in Puerto Rico, our second homeport, servicing aids to navigation to facilitate the movement of commerce into Puerto Rico and supporting safe navigation around the island,” said Cmdr. Erin H. Chlum, cutter Willow commanding officer. “We were especially grateful for the opportunity to work in areas affected by Hurricane Fiona to ensure necessary resources, fuel and supplies can reach the island and people in need.”

Cutter Willow is responsible for the maintenance of 246 aids to navigation throughout the Coast Guard’s 7th District, ranging from South Carolina to the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as Guantanamo Bay and Haiti.

Coast Guard Cutter Willow is a 225-foot sea-going buoy tender homeported in Charleston, South Carolina.

Marine Corps Adjusts Interim Guidance for ACV Waterborne Operations following Training Incident

U.S. Marines assigned to the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, conduct waterborne training with an Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) from shore to loading amphibious transport dock ship USS Anchorage (LPD 23) at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 12, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Willow Marshall*

HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS – Following a training incident, the Marine Corps has adjusted Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) waterborne operations guidance, ceasing water operations involving surf zone transit to allow for additional testing and evaluation.

On Oct. 13, 2022, at approximately 7:45 p.m. PST, an Amphibious Combat Vehicle assigned to Assault Amphibian School was conducting normal scheduled training operations when it rolled over in the surf zone after a reported mechanical malfunction near Camp Pendleton, California. Of the three crew members inside the vehicle, none sustained injuries or required medical attention. The incident is currently under investigation.

“We’re taking a deliberate and methodical approach to fielding this platform,” said Lt. Gen. David H. Furness, deputy commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations. “This adjustment to current guidance ensures our Marines have the ability to safely train and maintain proficiency with the platform while we work to conduct additional testing.”

Suspension of ACV surf zone transit will remain in effect until additional testing data can be collected and analyzed. In support of this, surf zone operations for Amphibious Vehicle Testing Branch-sponsored testing is authorized.

Navy Demos Wide Range of VTOL Systems for Future Operations

A vendor demonstrates the vertical takeoff and landing capability of a small unmanned aircraft system during a PMA-263 sponsored technical assessment Sept. 20 in California, Md. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy and Marine Corps Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems (PMA-263) program team put Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) systems through their paces during a two-week technical demonstration in mid-September, the Naval Air Systems Command said in an Oct. 17 release.

More than a dozen vendors attended the event to help inform the Navy Expeditionary Warfare community of the functions and capabilities available on the commercial market. The VTOL systems represented a wide range of configurations including outdoor, indoor, hybrid VTOL/fixed wing and tethered flight capability.

In partnership with the University of Maryland UAS Test Site, PMA-263's Family of Small UAS (FoSUAS) team evaluated each system against a standard test card to determine its suitability for expeditionary combat support. In addition to basic measurements like length, height, weight and pack-up size, performance data was collected for ease of operation, range, endurance, audibility, electro-optical and infrared imagery quality and other unique capabilities of each system.

"The goal was to understand what the state of the market is today," said Col. Victor Argobright, PMA-263 program manager. "We want to show off what is available right now for future procurements to our Navy Expeditionary community."

Participants representing the Naval Special Warfare, Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and Naval Construction Force communities and their Joint Service counterparts were given the opportunity to engage directly with the participating vendors and to observe the flight demonstrations. Each participant was also asked provide their feedback on the potential of each system to fulfill their unique mission

requirements.

“Flight demonstration events like this are a critical market research function for the PMA and help us to validate performance data reported by vendors,” said Lt. Cmdr. Ben Whatley, PMA-263 FoSUAS military lead. “We want to put these systems through their paces while also providing a venue for end-users to learn about existing and emerging SUAS technology. Moreover, events where operators from the supported Navy communities come together to collaborate and exchange information about their unique SUAS program needs provide added value to the PMA by ensuring unity of vision and a corresponding unity of acquisition effort.”

The majority of systems demonstrated last month are currently in production and available for procurement. Vendors also had the opportunity to showcase additional developmental capabilities, though these systems were not evaluated against any of the standardized test cards.

“Unmanned systems technology is advancing at an incredible pace,” Argobright said. “To ensure that our Navy and Marine Corps teams are able to adapt to and outmatch the capability advancements of our adversaries, it is imperative that we leverage rapid acquisition solutions in order to put relevant technology in the hands of the warfighter faster.”

PMA-263 will use University of Maryland UAS Test Site’s assessment data and observer feedback from the event to inform the program’s priorities for follow-on engineering assessments, potential for operational testing, and inclusion of new platforms within the FoSUAS programs of record.

The PMA-263 FoSUAS integrated product team currently supports Group 1 and 2 SUAS including the PD-100 Black Hornet 3, Skydio X2D, SkyRaider R80D and RQ-20B Puma.

U.S. Navy Supports Australia's Indo-Pacific Deployment Alongside Canada, Japan in the South China Sea

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Milius (DDG 69) conducts a trilateral training exercise with the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force Murusame-class destroyer JS Kirisame (DD-104), the Royal Australian Navy Supply-class auxiliary replenishment oiler HMAS Stalwart (A304) and the Hobart-class air warfare destroyer HMAS Hobart (DDG 39) while operating in the South China Sea, Oct. 07. U.S. NAVY / *Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Richard Cho*

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Maritime forces from Canada, Japan and the United States concluded exercises in the South China Sea in

support of Royal Australian Navy forces, Oct. 17, Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs said in a release.

This is the first time all four nations have trained together in the South China Sea exercising complex, maritime operations in the region.

This exercise builds on the previous bilateral and trilateral exercises from recent months conducted in the South China Sea. Throughout the naval exercises, participants trained together and conducted integrated operations designed to increase the allies' collective ability to maintain maritime security and readiness to respond to any regional contingency. Integrated events included surface, subsurface and air defense exercises that included Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) from several participating nations.

Representing Commander, Task Force 71 are U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Milius (DDG 69) and USS Higgins (DDG 76).

"Working with our Australian, Canadian and Japanese allies in the South China Sea has been an invaluable experience and opportunity," said Cmdr. Matthew Hays, commanding officer of USS Milius. "Combined maritime exercises help us strengthen interoperability and increase collective war-fighting readiness. It was great to be able to work with these 3 fine navies and to demonstrate our unwavering strong support for their increasing role in the region and our commitment to a free and open Indo-pacific."

Professional engagement and cooperation with allies and partners is the foundation of regional stability, which fosters peace and prosperity for all nations.

Australia was represented by the Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Arunta (FFH 151) and HMAS Hobart (DDG 39).

Japan was represented by the JS Suzutsuki (DD 117) and JS Kirisame (DD 104).

Representing Canada was the Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Winnipeg (FFH 338).

“HMCS Winnipeg’s deployment in the Indo-Pacific on Operation PROJECTION is aimed at conducting forward naval presence operations in the region as well as participating in cooperative deployments and naval exercises with allied and partner nations,” said Commander Annick Fortin, commanding officer of HMCS Winnipeg. “These exercises are an excellent example as they demonstrate our interoperability with other navies and provides opportunities to learn as well as prove our abilities to work seamlessly together. It is a prime example of our motto ‘one with the strength of many;’ working together, we are stronger.”

Vice Adm. Thomas: Triton UAV’s ‘Tremendous Endurance’ Benefits Fleet

A U.S. Navy MQ-4C Triton assigned to Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19 prepares to take off from the flightline at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Iwakuni, Japan, Oct. 5, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. David Getz*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The commander of the Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet said the MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle currently deployed in the Western Pacific is proving to be a benefitting to his fleet's operations.

"Any sensor is goodness in my fleet," said Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, speaking Oct. 14 at the U.S. Naval Institute in Annapolis, Maryland, in a Maritime Security Dialogue, a series conducted by the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies and sponsored by HII. "It's a huge AOR [area of responsibility] and to have something that has that kind of legs [range] and that persistence really helps."

"We've obviously been operating in theater with Triton for quite some time," Thomas said. "We're getting close to the IOC

[Initial Operational Capability] level with Triton.

“We’re going to use Triton as a replacement for some of our surveillance aircraft,” he said. “So, the biggest benefit it brings clearly is its tremendous endurance. We’ve operated it out of Guam routinely. We’ve started to operate it out of various places in Japan, trying to not only make sure we have numerous places to take-off and land.”

The admiral said the fleet is working to build up an orbit “to learn our way through some of the capabilities that an EP-3 [Aries II Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft] might bring back. It will be a different way of processing the information than we do with our EP-3s, so we’re working as a Navy to see how we seamlessly transition.”

U.S. Naval Forces in Middle East Interdict $29 Million in Illegal Drugs

Personnel from U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter USCGC Charles Moulthrope (WPC 1141) interdict a fishing vessel smuggling illicit drugs in the Gulf of Oman, Oct. 12. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Information Systems Technician 1st Class Vincent Aguirre*

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter seized an estimated $29 million worth of illicit narcotics from a fishing vessel while patrolling the Gulf of Oman, Oct. 12, two weeks after another sizable interdiction, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in an Oct. 13 release.

USCGC Charles Moulthrope (WPC 1141) confiscated 2,980 kilograms of opium and 400 kilograms of methamphetamines as the fishing vessel transited international waters. The Coast Guard cutter was operating in support of Combined Task Force 150, which oversees maritime security operations for Combined Maritime Forces in the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Gulf of Aden.

“A success like this is a team effort. I am proud of each and

every member of our crew," said Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Hills, Charles Moulthrope's commanding officer. "We remain committed to countering the flow of illegal contraband and promoting security and stability across the region."

Hills' crew previously interdicted another fishing vessel Sept. 27 while patrolling the Gulf of Oman, which led to the seizure of $85 million worth of illegal drugs.

Charles Moulthrope arrived in the Middle East in May and operates from the U.S. Navy base in Bahrain where U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces are headquartered.

Navy Transferred Remaining RQ-4A BAMS-D UAVs to NASA

The RQ-4A Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Demonstrator returned from 5th Fleet to Patuxent River, Maryland, last

summer after accruing more than 42,500 flight hours and over 2,000 oversea missions during a 13-year deployment. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has transferred its three remaining RQ-4A BAMS-D high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

"All three currently reside at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center and will be operated by NASA for the DoD Test Resource Management Center (TRMC, the new aircraft custodian)," said Jamie Cosgrove, a spokeswoman for the Navy's Program Executive Office – Strike and Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons. "The remaining ground control equipment for the system, as well as all the RQ-4A non-payload spares, have likewise been transferred to TRMC."

The last of the three RQ-4As had returned to its home base, Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, last summer from deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, culminating a 13-year span of operations that began as a six-month experiment.

The Navy had deployed the RQ-4A to Southwest Asia since 2009 as a component of the BAMS-D program. Five Block 10 RQ-4As were acquired from the U.S. Air Force and were based at Patuxent River and operated in sequence over the years by detachments of Patrol Reconnaissance Wings 5, 2 and 11. The detachment kept at least one RQ-4A in the rotation to a base in the Persian Gulf region. One was lost in a mishap in Maryland in June 2012. Another was shot down June 19, 2019, in an unprovoked attack in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz by an Iranian surface-to-air missile.

BAMS-D provided more than 50% of maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in theater accruing over 42,500 flight hours in 2,069 overseas missions, the Navy said.

In the Navy’s 2022 budget request, divestment of the RQ-4A Global Hawk Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance-Demonstrator UAV had been planned for acceleration from 2023 to 2022, with the savings invested in higher priorities.

The BAMS-D is being replaced by a Global Hawk derivative, the MQ-4C Triton, which has been deployed to the Western Pacific in an Early Operational Capability deployment. The Triton with an upgraded sensor capability will be deployed in 2023.

Vice Admiral: U.S. Navy Seeks 100-USV Fleet Patrolling Middle East Waterways by Next Summer

Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessels (USV) operate with the guided-missile cruiser USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), the Royal Navy Sandown-class minehunter HMS Bangor (M109), HMS Chiddingfold (M37) and the U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class cutter USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142) in the Arabian Gulf during exercise Phantom Scope. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Roland Franklin*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy hopes to have a fleet of 100 unmanned service vessels (USVs) patrolling the waterways of the Middle East region by the summer of 2023, said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, during a media roundtable on Oct. 12.

Cooper said that he estimates about 20% of those USVs to be controlled by the United States, and the remaining 80% to be controlled by countries in the region.

This fleet of USVs will "map the pattern of life that's happening around them" throughout the region," he said. When this network spots something different in the pattern, they'll take pictures and alert a U.S. Navy command center where a

human being can make a decision about how to use that information.

This is enabled by the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which allows the Navy to monitor the thousands of ships that are underway in the region at any given time – something human beings could not do on their own, Cooper said.

"We can use manned ships much more efficiently, much more effectively," he said.

Cooper said he has seen a growth in the practicality of USVs and AI to enhance the Navy's control over the region.

"There's no single navy alone that can patrol [the waters around the Arabian peninsula]," he said. "We all know the criticality of the waters to the greater flow of commerce throughout the region, and so we think the best way to cover that and expand maritime domain awareness is … [by] using unmanned sensors through the theater along with AI."

Cooper also noted that U.S. Naval Forces Central Command has been engaged in other activities in the region, calling the two most important initiatives "accelerating innovation" – which involved the aforementioned USV efforts – but also "strengthening partnerships."

He pointed to initiatives by the Navy such as the Combined Maritime Forces and the International Maritime Security Construct, which are consortiums that gather nations in the region to cooperate with the Navy in achieving the sea service's objectives. He also brought up the IMX exercise, an 18-day biennial naval training event led by the command that took place earlier this year and drew participation from dozens of countries.

"We lead two of the largest coalition task forces in the world – each of them will grow in membership and partnership," Cooper said, noting that in 2021 the command did 33 exercises

with countries in the region and will double that figure by the end of this year.

U.S., Federated States of Micronesia Sign Expanded Shiprider Agreement

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam Commander Capt. Nicholas R. Simmons and the Honorable Joses R. Gallen, Secretary of Justice, Federated States of Micronesia, signed an expanded shiprider agreement allowing remote coordination of authorities, the first of its kind aboard the USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) in Guam, on Oct. 13, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir*

SANTA RITA, Guam – To overcome complex challenges to maritime enforcement in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), a nation with over six hundred islands, representatives of the

United States and the FSM signed a remote shiprider agreement on Oct. 13, 2022, during a Joint Committee Meeting hosted by Joint Region Marianas.

Through remote coordination, this agreement, the first of its kind, will enable the U.S. to act on behalf of the country 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 through command centers to receive approval from the FSM to act.

Shiprider agreements allow maritime law enforcement officers to observe, board and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within a designated exclusive economic zone (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.

“We’re thrilled to cooperate with our Federated States of Micronesia partners on this initiative that will reap benefits for FSM’s economic, environmental and national security in the maritime domain,” said Alissa Bibb, chargé d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Kolonia.

The dynamic nature of detecting, deterring and suppressing illegal activity in the Pacific, like fisheries offenses and illicit maritime drug trafficking, requires creative and collaborative solutions. This agreement builds on the enduring partnership and long-standing shiprider agreement between the two nations by providing a new framework to conduct maritime operations and relies on the professionalism and expertise of U.S. and FSM maritime law enforcement officers.

The U.S. Coast Guard regularly exercises 13 bilateral fisheries law enforcement agreements with countries throughout

the Pacific islands. These agreements enable U.S. Coast Guard personnel and U. S. Navy vessels with embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel to work with host nations to protect critical regional resources. Shiprider efforts greatly enhance host-nation sovereignty by enabling Pacific Island Nation partners to enforce their laws and regulations using U.S. assets.

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. FSM consists of four states – Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae – each with a mix of unique peoples, languages and cultures. FSM is a signatory to a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They are also a Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association member and a party to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

"This historic agreement significantly strengthens presence and enforcement options to counter illicit maritime activity in the region. It is only made possible by the deep and abiding relationships and respect between the Coast Guard and our FSM partners," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia. "FSM has the 14th largest EEZ in the world and only two patrol boats. Our crews spend ample time within the region but getting a shiprider aboard our vessels can be a real logistical challenge. This agreement dramatically increases the capacity of available resources to act on FSM's behalf to protect their living marine resources and sovereignty. We appreciate their continued trust and confidence as we work together."

The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) hosted Chargé d'affaires Bibb and her team aboard in Pohnpei in September. They met with several key officials, and members of the cutter's engineering team conducted a subject matter exchange with the crew of FSS Palikir, the last active Pacific-class patrol

boat, on shipboard repairs and assisting with preventative maintenance.

In May, USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) made a contactless crew rest and re-fueling stop in FSM during their expeditionary patrol across Oceania. In December 2021, USCGC Sequoia (WLB 215), working alongside the Navy's Underwater Construction Team Two (UCT-2), conducted operations to widen the channel at Kapingamarangi Atoll. U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam also provides search and rescue support to FSM, with several successful cases in the last year, resulting in ten lives saved.

The shiprider program supports regional coordination and aligns with the National Security Strategy, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command efforts, and the U.S. Coast Guard's Operation Blue Pacific. The bilateral agreements enacted in the Pacific are the bedrock of regional maritime law enforcement partnership. They convey the United States' ongoing investment in protecting shared resources and interest in maritime safety and security, including fair and reciprocal trade, while standing against a current of aggressive and coercive influence in the region.

The U.S. is devoted to ensuring greater unity and a free and open Indo-Pacific for all nations who observe the rule of law. The U.S. Coast Guard continues to demonstrate our enduring presence in the Pacific and help facilitate increased regional stability, security and resilience for U.S. partners.

Construction of New Maritime

Center at Coast Guard Academy Nearly Complete

U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, one of two senators for Connecticut, speaks at the commissioning ceremony of the Maritime Center of Excellence, Oct. 12. The 20,000 square-foot Maritime Center of Excellence (MCOE) will be the Academy's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building and will highlight the unique waterfront programs there. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Abban*

NEW LONDON, Conn. – A $25 million construction project is nearing completion at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy that will transform the waterfront area of the 90-year-old campus, the Academy said in an Oct. 12 release.

A ceremony and reception acknowledging the milestone was held at the center Oct. 12 with construction company representatives, cadets and alumni eager to tour the nearly completed project.

The 20,000 square-foot Maritime Center of Excellence (MCOE) will be the Academy's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building and will highlight the unique waterfront programs there.

With a curvilinear vaulted roof, wooden decks and true north orientation, the building is designed to highlight the waterfront landscape. The new facility will feature interactive and high-tech classrooms designed to encourage collaboration.

The modern design of the center also includes ambitious sustainability design goals in line with coordinated climate resiliency efforts across the service to address the dangers posed by climate change.

The interior spaces of the future center have been designed with access to daylight and natural ventilation to minimize reliance on artificial lighting and air conditioning. Double-height spaces for vessel maintenance, office space and an atrium will provide natural ventilation.

Other sustainability goals include the exploration of ground-source heating and cooling, solar panels and rainwater harvesting. The building exterior will also feature durable, resilient materials that are easily maintained.

The completion of the center represents a significant step forward as the Academy works to recapitalize 1930's infrastructure and build modern training and education spaces to develop the future Coast Guard workforce.

"This LEED-certified, multi-purpose facility will be a space where young women and men can gather to learn and grow," said Rear Adm. Bill Kelly, academy superintendent. "I am certain it will enhance an appreciation for the water and all its power and beauty, and ultimately play an important role in helping us instill a liking for the sea and its lore."