

Second Navy Squadron Ready for F-35C Transition



An F-35C Lightning II carrier variant joint strike fighter launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68). U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Shauna C. Sowersby

ARLINGTON, Va. – The second Navy strike fighter squadron (VFA) slated for transition to the F-35C Lightning II strike fighter has made its last flight in the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

The Warhawks of VFA-97, based at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, flew the Super Hornet for the last time on Feb. 26. For more than a year, the squadron has operated older F/A-18Es in an adversary role to help train sister VFA squadrons in aerial combat.

The Warhawks will receive transition training at Lemoore from VFA-125, the fleet replacement squadron for the F-35C.

VFA-97 will become the Navy's second fleet F-35C squadron. The first, VFA-147, is scheduled to deploy later this year with

Carrier Air Wing Two on USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70).

VFA-97 had operated the F/A-18 Hornet since 1991, and the F/A-18E Super Hornet since 2013.

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 (VMFA-314) also has completed transition to the F-35C and is scheduled to deploy on a carrier in fiscal 2022.

Boeing Loyal Wingman Uncrewed Aircraft Completes First Flight



Boeing Australia and the Royal Australian Air Force have successfully completed the first test flight of the Loyal Wingman uncrewed aircraft. Boeing

AUSTRALIA – Boeing Australia and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) have successfully completed the first test flight of the Loyal Wingman uncrewed aircraft, the company said in a

March 1 release.

The flight of the first military aircraft to be designed and manufactured in Australia in more than 50 years flew under the supervision of a Boeing test pilot monitoring the aircraft from a ground control station at the Woomera Range Complex.

“The Loyal Wingman’s first flight is a major step in this long-term, significant project for the Air Force and Boeing Australia, and we’re thrilled to be a part of the successful test,” said Air Vice-Marshal Cath Roberts, RAAF head of Air Force Capability. “The Loyal Wingman project is a pathfinder for the integration of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence to create smart human-machine teams.

“Through this project we are learning how to integrate these new capabilities to complement and extend air combat and other missions,” she said.

Following a series of taxi tests validating ground handling, navigation and control, and pilot interface, the aircraft completed a successful takeoff under its own power before flying a pre-determined route at different speeds and altitudes to verify flight functionality and demonstrate the performance of the Airpower Teaming System design.

“Boeing and Australia are pioneering fully integrated combat operations by crewed and uncrewed aircraft,” said Boeing Defense, Space & Security President and CEO Leanne Caret. “We’re honored to be opening this part of aviation’s future with the Royal Australian Air Force, and we look forward to showing others how they also could benefit from our loyal wingman capabilities.”

With support from more than 35 Australian industry teams and leveraging Boeing’s innovative processes, including model-based engineering techniques, such as a digital twin to digitally flight-test missions, the team was able to manufacture the aircraft from design to flight in three

years.

This first Loyal Wingman aircraft is serving as the foundation for the Boeing Airpower Teaming System being developed for various global defense customers. The aircraft will fly alongside other platforms, using artificial intelligence to team with existing crewed and uncrewed assets to complement mission capabilities.

Additional Loyal Wingman aircraft are currently under development, with plans for teaming flights scheduled for later this year.

Fairbanks Morse Delivers Four Common Rail Technology Engines for ESB 6



Fairbanks Morse recently delivered four engines to General Dynamics NASSCO for use on the future expeditionary sea base ship USS John L. Canley (ESB 6). Show in this 2020 photo is ESB USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4). U.S. Navy/ Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Conner Foy BELoit, Wis. – Fairbanks Morse, a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, recently delivered four FM 6L48/60CR engines to General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego for Military Sealift Command on the future expeditionary sea base ship USS John L. Canley (ESB 6).

The ship is the sixth in the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command Expeditionary Transfer Dock (ESD)/Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) program and is designed to serve as a mobile sea base that provides access to critical infrastructure for the deployment of forces and supplies.

"We are proud to once again deliver American-made power and propulsion systems that support critical operations for the U.S. Navy's global missions," said George Whittier, Fairbanks

Morse's CEO. "Our common rail technology solution is one of the most fuel-efficient and reliable maritime power solutions available and will generate significant cost savings for the U.S. Navy over the operational lifetime of the engines."

The four FM 6L48/60CR engines are rated at 6,480 kW and will deliver a total of 25,920 kW of installed power. The engines use common rail technology to deliver high fuel efficiency throughout the ships' operational conditions. Common rail technology uses a high-pressure header, high-pressure pumps, electronically controlled fuel delivery, electronic governing system and an advanced control system to deliver precise amounts of fuel throughout all engine operations. This results in improved performance increased fuel efficiency and lower emissions.

ESB class ships are used for a wide range of military operations and may support multiple operational phases. Among these are Airborne Mine Counter Measures (AMCM), counter-piracy operations, maritime security operations, humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions, and U.S. Marine Corps crisis response.

ESB 6 honors Marine Corp Sergeant Major (retired) John L. Canley, a Medal of Honor Recipient for his actions serving during the Battle of Hue City in Vietnam Jan. 31 – Feb. 6, 1968. The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest military honor.

General Dynamics NASSCO started construction on ESB 6 in June 2020 and is also contracted to build ESB 7. Fairbanks Morse will begin construction on engines for ESB 7 later this year.

Fairbanks Morse has served the U.S. Navy for more than 70 years, providing high-quality engines for marine propulsion and ship service systems. Today, Fairbanks Morse engines are installed on approximately 80% of U.S. Navy ships with a

medium speed application.

Navy Orders Four Additional CMV-22B Osprey COD Aircraft



A CMV-22B Osprey from the "Titans" of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30 approaches the flight deck of Nimitz-class nuclear aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aaron T. Smith

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has ordered four additional CMV-22B Osprey carrier-onboard delivery aircraft, according to a Feb. 26 Defense Department contract announcement.

The Bell Boeing Joint Project Office, Amarillo, Texas, was awarded a \$309.6 contract modification by the Naval Air

Systems Command for the four CMV-22Bs,” the announcement said.

The Navy’s CMV-22B replaces the C-2A Greyhound for the Carrier On-Board Delivery (COD) mission. Its mission is to transport personnel, mail, supplies and cargo from shore bases to aircraft carriers at sea. Forty-four of the 48 Navy program of record aircraft will be delivered under the June 2018 multiyear procurement contract.

The CMV-22B differs from the MV-22B by having a high-frequency radio, extra fuel capacity, improved fuel dump capability, improved lighting for cargo handling and a public address system. The aircraft can carry up to 6,000 pounds up to a range of 1,150 nautical miles. It is capable of internally carrying the F-135 engine power module for the F-35 Lightning II.

The CMV-22B made its first flight on Dec. 19, 2019 at Bell Flight’s Amarillo, Texas assembly facility and later flew to Naval Air Station Patuxent River to continue flight testing in February 2020. The first CMV-22B squadron, VRM-30, is working up a detachment to deploy on board USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70).

Operational Test and initial operation capability are scheduled for 2021; full operational capability is scheduled for 2024.

DoD Adds Two Mark VI Patrol

Boats to Ukraine Aid Package



A Mark VI patrol boat, shown here in the Arabian Gulf in March 2020. U.S. Army / Pfc. Christopher Cameron
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Department of Defense has added two more modern patrol boats for Ukraine in a new security assistance package.

“The Department of Defense announces a new \$125 million package for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative that includes training, equipment, and advisory efforts to help Ukraine’s forces preserve the country’s territorial integrity, secure its borders, and improve interoperability with NATO, the department said in a March 1 release. “This action reaffirms the U.S. commitment to providing defensive lethal weapons to enable Ukraine to more effectively defend itself against Russian aggression.

“The USAI package includes two additional armed Mark VI patrol boats to enhance Ukraine’s capacity to patrol and defend its

territorial waters,” the release said. “To date, the U.S. has committed a total of eight Mark VI patrol boats.”

The Mark VI boats are being built by SAFE Boats International LLC of Bremerton, Washington.

The U.S. State Department has approved the possible foreign military sale of up to 16 Mark VI patrol boats and related equipment to Ukraine for an estimated cost of \$600 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a June 17, 2020, release.

The patrol boats will be operated by the Ukrainian navy to defend territorial waters and other maritime interests. They each will be armed with two MSI Seahawk A2 gun systems and two Mk44 cannons and equipped with electro-optical/infrared sensors and loud-speaker systems.

The sale will “improve Ukraine’s capability to meet current and future threats by providing a modern, fast, short-range vessel,” the DSCA said.

Mark VI patrol boats are used by the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command for escort of high-value ships, coastal patrol, and other maritime security missions.

Admiral Praises Marine Corps’ Last Hornet Carrier Deployment



An F/A-18C Hornet, from the “Death Rattlers” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 323, makes an arrested landing on the flight deck of the USS Nimitz (CVN 68). Nimitz, flagship of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, is currently conducting routine operations in U.S. 3rd Fleet. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Charles DeParlier

ARLINGTON, Va.—The last deployment of the F/A-18C Hornet on an aircraft carrier ended last week with the return of the “Death Rattlers” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 (VMFA-323) from a deployment with Carrier Air Wing 17 on board USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

The Death Rattlers returned to their home base, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California on Feb. 25, the day before Nimitz arrived at San Diego to offload CVW-17 personnel before heading to its homeport of Bremerton, Washington.

Rear Adm. James Kirk, commander, Carrier Strike Group 11 and the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, told reporters in a Feb. 26 teleconference that VMFA-323, despite flying the oldest jets deployed on a carrier, “performed fantastic yeoman work. Obviously with older aircraft, they do have challenges, but they rose to those challenges. Those maintainers did a great job, and those Marine pilots executed those missions, whether it was in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation

Octave Quartz, or Operation Resolute Support, or the just-presence missions we did or the operations we did during dual-carrier ops in the South China Sea with the Ronald Reagan Strike Group of the TR [Theodore Roosevelt] Strike Group.

“That Marine squadron met the mark, hit the mission,” Kirk said.

The deployment of Marine Corps F/A-18A and F/A-18C squadrons on carriers over the last two decades was a manifestation of the TACAIR Integration Plan, originally designed to provide one Marine VMFA squadron for each of 10 carrier air wings. Because of heavy commitments to wars in Afghanistan and then Iraq, the plan never fielded more than four VMFAs in the carrier air wings. With the transition of some VMFA squadrons to the F-35B and F-35C Lightning II strike fighters, the number of VMFAs on carriers dwindled to just one, VMFA-323.

The program is alive, however, with VMFA-314 – the Corps’ first F-35C squadron – preparing to deploy with a carrier air wing in 2022. The Corps is procuring 67 F-35Cs, a number that will allow it eventually to field four VMFAs equipped with the type in carrier air wings.

VMFA-323 will continue to operate the F/A-18C and will form a fleet replacement detachment to assume the role of training pilots and maintainers for Marine Corps F/A-18C/D squadrons after the fleet replacement squadron, VMFAT-101, is deactivated during fiscal 2023, as the Hornet training load decreases as the type is retired in 2030. According to the Marine Corps’ latest training plan, promulgated in 2019, VMFA-323 will be the Corp’s last active-duty Hornet squadron and will upgrade to the F-35B.

The Death Rattlers were activated in 1943 with F4U Corsair fighters and flew combat missions against Japanese forces during World War II. They flew Corsairs again in the Korean War and F-4B Phantom II fighters in the Vietnam War. They flew

Phantoms from carriers after the Vietnam war and were one of the Corps' first Hornet squadrons. Together with VMFA-314, they made the Corps' first carrier deployment in the type, flying in combat from USS Coral Sea (CV 43) in 1986 against Libyan targets during Operations Prairie Fire and El Dorado Canyon.

The last F/A-18C carrier deployment of a Navy squadron ended in April 2018 with the return of Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA-34) with Carrier Air Wing Two from USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). VFA-34 was the Navy's last active-duty deploying squadron to operate the legacy Hornet and has since upgraded to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

The Navy is divesting itself of the legacy Hornets as fast as procurement of the F/A-18E/F and F-35C permit. The Blue Angels flight demonstration squadron recently completed the transition to the Super Hornet and soon the Navy's sole reserve VFA squadron will make the transition.

Navy Orders 15th
Expeditionary Fast Transport
from Austal



Expeditionary Fast Transport vessels, USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1), USNS Choctaw County (T-EPF 2) and USNS Fall River (T-EPF 4) shown at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in this 2015 photo. U.S. Navy / Brian Suriani

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Austal USA a contract to build the 15th Spear-head-class expeditionary fast transport (EPF).

The Naval Sea Systems Command awarded Austal a \$235 million “undefinitized” contract action modification on Feb. 26, 2021, for the detailed design and construction of EPF 15, the company said in a release.

The EPF, designated T-EPF in service to the Military Sealift Command, originally was designated a joint high-speed vessel, but has proven versatile in performing a number of roles in support of regional combatant commanders. Those roles have included humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime security, surveillance, command and control, and counter narcotics, among others.

“With a draft of only 13 feet and waterjet propulsion, the EPF is able to access austere and degraded ports with minimal external assistance providing flexibility to fleet and combatant commanders,” the Austal release said. “With its maneuverability, large open mission bay and ability to achieve speeds greater-than 35-knots, the EPFs have the capability to support additional missions such as special operations and medical support.”

The Spearhead class originally was intended to be 10 ships: five for the U.S. Army and five for the Navy. The five Army ships later were reallocated to the Navy. The lead ship was delivered in December 2012. As the utility and success of the ships was demonstrated in operations, Congress has approved an increase in the number of hulls authorized, now at 15 ships. Austal has delivered 12 to the Military Sealift Command to date.

EPF 15, like EPFs 13 and 14, will include an expeditionary medical capability. The EPFs are operated by civilian mariners of the Military Sealift Command.

“At its core, the EPF is designed to be highly capable, flexible and affordable,” said Rusty Murdaugh, Austal USA’s chief financial officer and interim president. “With this baseline, we’ve been able to deliver multiple ships that are performing different missions for the U.S. military. The award of EPF 15 allows the Navy to leverage a hot production line and highly trained workforce to continue producing ships that are meeting the needs of warfighters today and into the future.”

Ingalls Shipbuilding Awarded Life-Cycle Engineering Contract on Navy's LPD 17 Program



USS San Antonio (LPD 17) approaches its assigned berthing space in Baltimore, Maryland, in this 2012 photo. Ingalls Shipbuilding has been awarded a contract for life-cycle engineering and support services for the San Antonio class of amphibious transport docks. U.S. Navy / Joseph P. Cirone
PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division has been awarded a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract for life-cycle engineering and support services on the U.S. Navy's San Antonio (LPD 17) class of amphibious transport docks, the company said in a Feb. 26 release. This follow-on contract consists of a base contract valued at \$36.9 million with a cumulative value of \$213.9 million if all

options are exercised.

“This contract enables Ingalls to continue providing LPD support and services that are critical to the sustainment of the Navy’s amphibious fleet,” said Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias. “Our talented workforce has the knowledge and experience required to perform this important work, and we are committed to ensuring these state-of-the-art warships serve our nation well into the future.”

Services provided in this contract include engineering change management; systems engineering and integration; supply chain management; training for new LPD 17-class shipboard systems; and the execution of industrial post-delivery availabilities.

“We appreciate the Navy’s continued investment in our experienced team and their reliance on the support we provide,” said David King, Ingalls’ LPD 17 life-cycle program manager. “This contract builds on our strong partnership with the Navy in the construction and post-delivery management of Navy ships. We look forward to supporting these ships as they evolve to meet the changing threat environment.”

San Antonio-class ships are 684 feet long and 105 feet wide and displace approximately 25,000 tons. Their principal mission is to deploy the combat and support elements of Marine expeditionary units and brigades. The ships can carry up to 800 troops and have the capability of transporting and debarking landing craft air cushion or conventional landing craft, augmented by helicopters or vertical take-off and landing aircraft such as the MV-22. These ships will support amphibious assault, special operations or expeditionary warfare missions through the first half of the 21st century.

Families Welcome Nimitz Carrier Strike Group Sailors after 331 Days of Separation



Aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) arrives Naval Air Station North Island on Feb. 26. Nimitz Carrier Strike Group returned after a more than 10-month deployment to U.S. 5th Fleet and U.S. 7th Fleet, which included freedom of navigation operations and participation in operations Freedom's Sentinel, Inherent Resolve and Octave Quartz. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Timothy Heaps

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (CSG) returned to San Diego Feb. 26 after nearly 11 months deployed in the U.S. 5th and 7th Fleet areas of operation (AOR), the Navy said. The strike group was the first to deploy after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

USS Nimitz departed its homeport, Naval Base Kitsap – Bremerton, on April 27, 2020, for integrated training and

began its deployment heading west on June 8. The crew began sequestering April 7, resulting in a separation from families of 331 days by the time the strike group returned.

During the deployment, the strike group supported operations Inherent Resolve, Freedom's Sentinel and Octave Quartz in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of operation, said Rear Adm. James Kirk, the strike group commander, in a Feb. 26 teleconference with reporters.

The strike group includes Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 11, aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17, Destroyer Squadron 9, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Princeton (CG 59) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104). The USS Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones also operated with the group but remains in the 5th Fleet AOR.

The strike group made the lengthy deployment with no liberty port calls, a necessity in the COVID era. The Nimitz and Princeton pulled alongside a pier four times and the Sterett two times during the deployment, but only for pier-side logistics.

During the deployment, the Nimitz CSG conducted dual carrier operations twice with the USS Theodore Roosevelt CSG and thrice with the USS Ronald Reagan CSG. The Nimitz CSG also operated with ships of the Indian navy, Royal Australian Navy and Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Nimitz disembarked CVW-17 and began its return to its homeport at Naval Base Kitsap – Bremerton. CVW-17 includes Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 137, VFA 94, VFA 22, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 323, Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 139, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 116, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 6, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 73 and Fleet Logistics Support Squadron

(VRC) 30.

SECDEF Announces More Flag Officer Nominations



Rear Adm. (lower half) William E. Chase III has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral, one of several flag officer nominations announced Feb. 26.

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced Feb. 26 that the president has made the following nominations:

Rear Adm. (lower half) William E. Chase III has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Chase is currently serving as senior military advisor for cyber policy to the under secretary of defense for policy; and the deputy principal cyber advisor to the secretary of defense, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Christopher C. French has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. French is currently serving as legal counsel to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) William C. Greene has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Greene is currently serving as fleet maintenance officer, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Joseph D. Noble Jr., has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Noble is currently serving as commander, Naval Supply Systems Command Weapons Systems Support, Philadelphia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) John A. Okon has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Okon is currently serving as commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, Stennis Space Center, Mississippi.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Scott W. Pappano has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Pappano is currently serving as program executive office, Columbia, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Dean A. VanderLey has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. VanderLey is currently serving as commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Atlantic with additional duties as fleet civil engineer (N01CE), U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

Capt. Kristin Acquavella has been nominated for appointment to

the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Acquavella is currently serving as director, plans and policies, N415, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Maria L. Aguayo has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Aguayo is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Joseph B. Hornbuckle has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Hornbuckle is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Patuxent River, Maryland.

Capt. Ronald J. Piret has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Piret is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, John C. Stennis Space Center, Hancock County, Mississippi.

Capt. Anthony E. Rossi has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Rossi is currently serving as major program manager, Mission Integration and Special Programs Office, PMA 298, Patuxent River, Maryland.

Capt. Stuart C. Satterwhite has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Satterwhite is currently serving as deputy director, enterprise support, Office of the Chief of Naval Personnel, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Ralph R. Smith III has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Smith is currently serving as director, Maritime Operations Center, U.S. Tenth Fleet/U.S. Fleet Cyber Command, Fort Meade, Maryland.