Exercise Digital Talon Advances Unmanned Lethality at Sea

ARABIAN GULF (Oct. 26, 2023) A MARTAC T-38 Devil Ray unmanned surface vehicle, equipped with a Lethal Miniature Aerial Missile System, operates in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 26. U.S. Naval Forces Central Command recently completed Exercise Digital Talon, demonstrating the ability of unmanned platforms to pair with traditionally crewed ships in "manned-unmanned teaming" to identify and target hostile forces at sea. Then, using munitions launched from another unmanned platform, engaged and destroyed those targets. **(Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jacob Vernier)**
Release from *U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs*

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MANAMA, Bahrain – U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) is advancing lethality and the combat capabilities of unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) during live weapons firing exercises in the international waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula, Oct. 23.

The firing exercises were conducted as part of Exercise Digital Talon and constituted the first use of lethal munitions from USVs in the Middle East region.

During the exercise, NAVCENT's Task Force 59, the Navy's first Unmanned and Artificial Intelligence Task Force, demonstrated the ability of unmanned platforms to pair with traditionally crewed ships in "manned-unmanned teaming" to identify and target simulated hostile forces at sea. The hostile forces were represented through the use of a target boat. Then, using live munitions launched from another unmanned platform, NAVCENT forces engaged and destroyed the targets.

During multiple firing events, a MARTAC T38 Devil Ray USV, equipped with a Lethal Miniature Aerial Missile System, successfully scored direct hits each time. A human operator ashore at Task Force 59's Robotics Operations Center made the engagement decisions.

Digital Talon was coordinated with and supported by Commander, Special Operations Forces Central Command.

This exercise is the second time in as many months the U.S. Navy has successfully demonstrated advanced unmanned capabilities in the region, according to Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, NAVCENT commander. In September, unmanned underwater surface and aerial vehicles were able to track Iranian Navy and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy ships and small boats over several days during routine patrols in and around the Strait of Hormuz.

"We are focused on the operational application of new, cutting-edge unmanned systems and artificial intelligence technologies. Last month, we integrated 12 different unmanned platforms with manned ships for 'manned-unmanned teaming' operations to conduct enhanced maritime security operations in the waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula," he said. "During Digital Talon, we took a significant step forward and

advanced our capability to the ‘next level’ beyond just maritime domain awareness, which has been a traditional focus with Task Force 59. We have proven these unmanned platforms can enhance fleet lethality. In doing so, we are strengthening regional maritime security and enhancing deterrence against malign activity.”

Looking ahead, Cooper said, he expects to see the progress expand in scale and impact, including future exercises expanding the arsenal of combat-capable unmanned systems.

“I’m excited about the direction we’re headed,” he said.

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet’s area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. This expanse, comprising 21 nations, includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al Mandeb.

Coast Guard, partners complete Operation Koa Kai off the Island of Hawaii

Release from U.S. Coast Guard 14th District

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Nov. 1, 2023

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard completed Operation Koa Kai, a comprehensive month-long maritime security and safety operation conducted throughout October off the Island of Hawaii.

The annual operation, carried out in collaboration with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Law Enforcement, focused on safeguarding the coastal waters and maritime assets, ensuring the well-being of both residents and visitors to the region.

Operations completed include:

- 137 underway hours with 19 joint patrol hours
- Two search and rescue responses
- 26 maritime security and response operation patrols
- 11 small vessel security boardings (SVSB)
- Three high-capacity passenger vessel escorts
- 24 Response Boat-Small boardings and nine uninspected passenger vessel boardings
- Dockside inspections conducted in collaboration with the Marine Safety Team (MST) Hawaii for certificate of inspection verification.

“This operation exemplifies the commitment of our Coast Guard personnel and partner agencies to the security and safety of Hawaii’s maritime domain,” said Chief Warrant Officer Omar Perez, a Coast Guard Sector Honolulu enforcement officer. “Our combined efforts are essential in maintaining maritime security and safeguarding lives in the waters off the Big Island of Hawaii.”

While taking part in Operation Koa Kai, the Coast Guard Maritime Safety & Security Team 91107 Honolulu (MSST) provided safety zone enforcement for the 2.4-mile swim course included in the Ironman World Championship Women’s Race held in Kailua-Kona. The MSST played a pivotal role in a collaborative interagency effort, joining forces with agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Department of Homeland Security Federal Air Marshals, Department of Defense, Hawaii Police Department, Hawaii Sheriff’s Office, Hawaii Conservation Officers, Hawaii Fire Department, and the Ironman Public Safety/Emergency Management department. This partnership, characterized by meticulous mission planning and preparation, was aimed at ensuring the safety of all athletes, spectators, staff, and volunteers during the high-profile event.

Operation Koa Kai reflects the Coast Guard’s mission to protect and serve the maritime community, ensuring the smooth

flow of commerce, maintaining maritime safety, and responding promptly to emergencies.

Agencies involved in Operation Koa Kai include:

- U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety & Security Team Honolulu (MSST)
- U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Team (MST) Hawaii
- NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)
- DLNR □□Hawaii Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement
- Kona Police Department

Statement From Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Senate Passage of Some U.S. Military Nominees

WASHINGTON (Sept. 14, 2023) Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti answers questions from members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during her confirmation hearing at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., Sept. 14 2023. Franchetti was nominated to become the next Chief of Naval Operations by President Joseph R. Biden. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Amanda R. Gray)
Release from the U.S. Department of Defense

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NOV. 2, 2023

I am glad the Senate has today confirmed Adm. Lisa Franchetti as Chief of Naval Operations, Gen. David Allvin as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Lt. Gen. Chris Mahoney as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. They are outstanding leaders who have faithfully served their country for decades, and I know they will continue to be great leaders of our force as they continue to tackle the crucial national security issues of these challenging times.

But we still have more than 370 superbly qualified leaders who have seen their nominations unnecessarily stalled. As we face a variety of urgent challenges, the most powerful fighting force in history must be at full-strength. This unprecedented delay in confirming our military's top leaders has hurt our military's readiness and unnecessarily weighed down our military families, who already give up so much to support those who serve. While today's vote is a step forward, we continue to urge the Senate to take swift action on the remaining nominations so that these American heroes can lead our team in keeping our country safe.

VAW-120 PARTICIPATES IN FINAL FLIGHT OF C-2A GREYHOUND, SIGNIFIES END OF SQUADRON'S TRAINING MISSION FOR CARRIER ONBOARD DELIVERY

OUTER BANKS, N.C. (Oct. 31, 2023) Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 120 marks the end of their training role for the C-2A Greyhound aircraft's carrier onboard delivery mission with a final flight over the Wright Brothers First Flight memorial at Kill Devil Hills, N.C. The Greyhound aircraft will be replaced by the CMV-22 Osprey aircraft in the coming years. (U.S. Navy photo by Aircrew Survival Equipmentman 2nd Class Richard Warren)

Release from Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, Public Affairs

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02 November 2023

NORFOLK, Virginia – To mark the official end of the Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 120 Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) training role for the carrier onboard delivery (COD) mission, the squadron's last C-2 instructor pilot, VAW-120 executive officer, and aircrew flew the C-2A Greyhound aircraft during a ceremonial flight over the Outer Banks and

Cape Hatteras operating area, Oct. 30.

Since September 1994, VAW-120 has served as the single FRS squadron to train all E-2C/D Hawkeye and C-2A aircrew. The last VAW-120 Greyhound flight provided an opportunity to recognize all of the previous aircrew who were trained at VAW-120 to operate the Greyhound.

Lt. Spencer Tack, who commanded the flight, flew the last VAW-120 Greyhound at the FRS. Tack discussed being afforded the opportunity to be part of the platform's storied history.

"It is surreal … we all knew it was not going to be around forever," Tack added, who completed the training of the final two C-2A aircrew in late September 2023. "I didn't think I would get a spot at the FRS initially, but looking back now, being one among the last is a huge honor."

VAW-120's last two C-2 instructor pilots, Tack and Lt. Patrick Sopko have shared a similar path to arrive at this historical juncture together. Both received their commission in 2014, Tack in March and Sopko in May. After initial flight school, they reported to VAW-120 and qualified together in 2017. Soon after their FRS training, Sopko left for VRC-30 on the west coast and Tack to VRC-40 on the east coast. Once again, in April 2021, both aviators returned to VAW-120 to train the remaining aircrew who will operate the C-2A until VRC-40 is decommissioned in 2026.

"I don't think it really has hit me yet; I also attended the decommissioning ceremony at VRC-30," Sopko said. "It is still an honor to represent the last instructors who have trained aircrew to operate the C-2."

Over the last several years while assigned to VAW-120, Tack and Sopko trained up to 15 aircrew. While both checked aboard

as instructors, they will check out together and report to VRC-40 where they will fly alongside the very same pilots they helped train over the past few years.

During the historical flight of VAW-120's last C-2A, an E-2C Hawkeye, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and a second C-2A from VRC-40 participated in the ceremonial flight to recognize past aviation accomplishments both in civilian and military history. The flight plan included a flyover above the Wright Brothers First Flight memorial.

"A lot of history in aviation, proud to incorporate our flight above the Wright Brothers National Memorial to signify their contributions to aviation and honor that of all aircrew who have trained at VAW-120 to fly the C-2A," said Lt. Joshua Reyes, a VAW-120 E-2 instructor pilot who conducted the flight planning for the historical flight. While that first flight lasted 12 seconds and covered a distance of 120 feet, it changed the aviation world.

Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Wing and the CMV-22B Osprey aircraft will be the replacement for the C-2A Greyhound for the COD mission. It provides the Navy with increases in capability and operational flexibility over the C-2A.

Tactical Resupply UAS ready for the fleet

Six production models of the TRV-150C Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System (TRUAS) arrive at Littoral Logistics Battalion Three (LLB-3), Marine Corps Base Hawaii. The Navy and Marine Corps announced Initial Operational Capability (IOC) for TRUAS Oct. 27. (Marine Corps Photo)
Release from Naval Air Systems Command

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Nov 1, 2023

Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md. – The Navy and Marine Corps announced Initial Operational Capability (IOC) for the TRV-150C Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System (TRUAS) Oct. 27 at Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

The first six production systems arrived last week at the Marines Third Littoral Logistics Battalion (LLB-3) in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, which means that LLB-3 is sufficiently manned, trained and ready to deploy with the TRV-150C.

“This achievement means the fleet is ready and fully capable of deploying and using this game-changing system, which will

enable Marines to perform forward deployed contested logistics missions," said Gregg Skinner, Navy and Marine Corps Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems program manager (PMA-263), whose Unmanned Logistics Systems-Air (ULS-A) team oversees the TRUAS program.

Prior to declaring IOC, support staff from the Air Test and Evaluations Squadron Two Four (UX-24) from Naval Air Warfare Center Webster Outlying Field in Maryland arrived at MCB Hawaii along with an instructor from the Training and Logistics Support Activity Pacific, to conduct final operator qualification with LLB-3. After reviewing the differences between prototype and production systems, the trainers and operators successfully completed 36 training flights to ensure that the unit was ready to deploy.

PMA-263 awarded the production contract for the TRV-150C in April 2023 following a rapid prototyping initiative that brought the system from inception to the fleet in less than four years.

"This was a total team effort in accomplishing this milestone in record time," Skinner said. "Special thanks to the PMA263 Team, Training and Logistics Support Activity Pacific, Air Test and Evaluations Squadron Two Four (UX-24), and the Survice Engineering Company (TRUAS prime contractor) for their hard work and dedication aimed at getting this much needed Force Design 2023 capability in the hands of the Warfighter."

TRUAS is a land based, autonomous UAS that provides organic logistics to Marine squads through automated launch, waypoint navigation, and automated landing and payload drop. The system provides battlefield logistics capability to distribute critical supplies at Expeditionary Advanced Bases, where the risk to manned aircraft would deny manned aviation resupply operations out to the last tactical mile.

"The contested logistics environment challenges the ability of

our Marines to distribute necessary supplies to the right place at the time of need," said Col. Aaron Angell, Logistics Combat Element Division director. "TRUAS gives a logistics unit the organic ability to immediately respond with a precision ground launched air delivery system. This is leap-ahead technology that we will learn to continue to shape future unmanned aerial logistics platforms."

USNS Mercy's visit to Marshall Islands marks launch of Pacific Partnership 24-1

The hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) prepares to anchor off the coast of Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands, prior to its first mission stop for Pacific Partnership 2024-1 Oct. 30,

2023. Pacific Partnership, now in its 19th iteration, is the largest multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission in the Pacific and brings together more than 1000 participants from 8 partner and host nations. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady Fontana)
Release from U.S. Pacific Fleet

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31 October 2023

On October 30, the United States Pacific Partnership has arrived in Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to commence the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific region.

The arrival of Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) to Majuro, RMI, signifies the launch of the Pacific Partnership 24-1 mission, which will enable American and Marshallese participants to work together to enhance disaster response capabilities and foster new and enduring friendships.

“The Pacific Partnership 24-1 mission is one example of our longstanding commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, while further strengthening enduring relationships and cooperation with partner-nations such as the RMI,” said Rear Adm. Mark A. Melson, Commander, Task Force 73 and Executive Agent for this year’s mission. “The RMI is a long and respected partner with deep ties to the U.S. Navy and contributes to security and stability in the region.”

At the invitation of host nations, Pacific Partnership’s mission partners conduct tailored humanitarian civil action preparedness activities in areas such as engineering, disaster response, public health, and host nation outreach events.

This year marks the fifth time Pacific Partnership has been to

RMI. This stop will provide tailored medical care focusing on surgeries, training for first responders, clinical care, subject-matter exchanges, and community education at Majuro, Ebeye and Aur Atolls.

Engineering projects will include school renovations at Long Island Elementary and Rita Elementary Schools, while experts in the field will share knowledge exchanges through exercises covering humanitarian and disaster relief topics.

Additionally, the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band will perform alongside Australian military musicians in a variety of community engagements.

“Pacific Partnership creates lasting bonds of friendships and trust between the United States, partner nations, and host nations,” said U.S. Navy Captain Brian Quin PP 24-1 Mission Commander. “I am excited to continue the tradition and honored to be a part of such an important mission”.

USNS Mercy will serve as the mission platform and a combined team of civilian crew members and uniformed military members make up the crew of Mercy, which can staff up to 1,200 medical personnel.

The ship has 12 fully equipped operating rooms, 1,000 hospital beds, radiological services, a medical laboratory, a pharmacy, optometry facilities, a CT scanner and an oxygen-producing plant. In addition to activities aboard the hospital ship, Pacific Partnership medical providers will work shoulder to shoulder with colleagues at the Majuro Hospital and Laura Clinic, ensuring that information exchange results in sustainable medical practices once USNS Mercy leaves the RMI.

Pacific Partnership focuses on multiple effort to help build resilience and host nation capacity to support essential humanitarian services.

As an added feature, RMI will partner with the Mercy's medical team and deploy the country's own hospital ship, Liwatoon Mour, to deliver health care services to outer atolls. They will take aboard and integrate Mercy medical staff to Aur Atoll in an effort to eradicate tuberculosis, a first-time collaboration for the Pacific Partnership mission.

This year's mission will also feature nearly 1,500 personnel from allies and partner nations including Australia, Chile, Japan, Germany, and New Zealand.

Born out of the devastation brought by the December 2004 tsunami that swept through parts of South and Southeast Asia, Pacific Partnership began as a military-led humanitarian response to one of the world's most catastrophic natural disasters. Building on the success and goodwill of this operation, the U.S. helped spearhead the inaugural Pacific Partnership mission in 2006. This mission leveraged partner militaries and the proficiencies of Non-Governmental Organizations to expand disaster relief capacity in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste.

Pacific Partnership, now in its 19th iteration, is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. Each year the mission team works collectively with host and partner nations to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase security and stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships in the Indo-Pacific.

For more information about Pacific Partnership visit www.facebook.com/pacificpartnership, www.instagram.com/pacific_partnership/ or https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/PacificPartnership. Pacific Partnership public affairs can be reached via email at

cherylcollins.pp24@gmail.com.

KRAKEN AND L3HARRIS COLLABORATE FOR USSV INNOVATION

Release from Kraken

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Kraken Technology Group is pleased to announce an official collaboration with L3Harris Technologies (NYSE: LHX) to advance the integration of control systems within the K40 MANTA prototype.

This is a pivotal step in the technical evolution of Kraken’s K40 MANTA platform, setting the foundation for the development of enhanced autonomous capabilities and ultimately, full autonomy.

The K40 is an uncrewed surface-subsurface (USSV) platform that utilises foils for rapid surface transit before submerging for clandestine manoeuvring. This high-performance vessel requires well-established, cutting-edge control systems and L3Harris possesses the necessary components and expertise required for seamless integration into the K40 MANTA. These integrated systems will enable the remote control of the uncrewed platform for engineering testing, foil development, powertrain calibration and demonstration before enhancement in later developmental stages.

“We look forward to working with L3Harris on the implementation of key systems for K40 MANTA as a foundation for future developments,” said Mal Crease, Founder and CEO of Kraken Technology Group.

“L3Harris is proud to collaborate with Kraken on this groundbreaking platform,” said Mark Exeter, Managing Director, ASV, L3Harris. *“Our two companies possess complementary skills, benefiting both organizations through this venture. Furthermore, this collaboration paves the way for broader collaboration, capitalizing on our shared expertise, further facilitated by our proximity to Portsmouth, a renowned UK marine innovation hub.”*

Second Cadre of Royal Australian Navy Officers Graduate from Nuclear Power

School while First Enlisted Sailors Enter

Release from Naval Reactors and AUKUS I&A Public Affairs

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Oct. 30, 2023

By Naval Reactors and AUKUS I&A Public Affairs

Goose Creek, South Carolina –

A further three Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Officers graduated the U.S. Navy's Nuclear Power School (NPS), Oct. 27, marking continued progress in Australia's goal to operate conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs).

This second cohort of RAN Officers started NPS in April 2023, and followed the RAN personnel to graduate in July. NPS is one

of the U.S. Department of Defense’s most rigorous and demanding schools.

The three students started NPS in April 2023, becoming the second group of RAN personnel to graduate one of the Department of Defense’s most rigorous and demanding schools.

“I had heard that nuclear power school was extremely challenging and it definitely was,” said one of the students. “Being here in the U.S., attending school, and ultimately helping to prepare Australia for its own SSN capability is a true honor. I already loved being a submarine officer, and am really excited to become a nuclear-qualified submarine officer.”

The RAN Officers’ will follow the July graduates for further training in an operating nuclear propulsion plant. The officers will then complete a Submarine Officer Basic Course before assignment to an American Virginia-class SSN to continue their training and qualifications with on-board experience.

In another AUKUS milestone, the first cohort of RAN enlisted sailors arrived in Charleston, South Carolina and commenced their training at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command. Similar to their officer counterparts, these sailors will complete Nuclear Power School and nuclear prototype training before being assigned to a Virginia-class submarine.

NPS trains officers and enlisted sailors in the science and engineering principles that are fundamental to the design, operation, and maintenance of naval nuclear propulsion plants.

“The officers and sailors graduating from the U.S. Navy’s nuclear training programs will form the nucleus of the RAN’s nuclear-qualified submariners,” said Capt. Lincoln Reifsteck the AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Manager. “Through them, Australia will develop its sovereign ability to

operate and supervise their own conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine fleet."

"Today marks yet another step forward in building the Royal Australian Navy's sovereign nuclear-powered submarine capability," said Vice Adm. Jonathan Mead, the Director-General of the Australian Submarine Agency. "Through AUKUS, Australia is leveraging the decades of nuclear propulsion experience to safely operate, build and maintain our own fleet of conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines."

There will be more than 15 RAN officers and sailors enrolled in nuclear training by the end of this year.

"I could not be more proud of all of the Royal Australian Navy officers and sailors who have attended the U.S. Nuclear Power School," said the Chief of the Royal Australian Navy, Vice Adm. Mark Hammond. "It's exciting to see our second cohort graduate from the program. These exceptional members of our Navy are charting the course for our future, receiving incredible training for our future submarine capability."

Supporting Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy is the first major initiative under AUKUS.

The leaders of the three partner nations announced the Optimal Pathway for the acquisition on March 13, 2023.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group Enters the

Mediterranean Sea

Release from Carrier Strike Group Two (CSG-2) Public Affairs

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Oct. 30, 2023

By Carrier Strike Group Two (CSG-2) Public Affairs

STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR – The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (IKECSG) transited the Strait of Gibraltar on October 28.

As a part of the U.S. Navy's globally-deployed forces, IKECSG will join the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group in support of the defense of Israel and to deter aggression throughout the region.

By direction of the Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, IKECSG will transit to U.S. Central Command to demonstrate its readiness to flex to any contingency. IKECSG remains committed to ensuring the security of allies and partners.

“Our arrival in the Mediterranean, en route to CENTCOM, provides reassurance to our allies and partners that we are committed to ensuring their security and well-being,” said Rear Adm. Marc Miguez, commander, Carrier Strike Group 2 (CSG-2), IKECSG. “Our presence, along with that of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier strike group, demonstrates the combat power and proficiency of the Navy’s deployed forces.”

The strike group is comprised of the flagship aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN69), the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), the guided-missile destroyers USS Mason (DDG 87) and USS Gravely (DDG 107) of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 22, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 3 with its nine squadrons, and the Information Warfare Commander.

Squadrons of CVW-3 include the “Gunslingers” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 105, the “Fighting Swordsmen” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 32, the “Rampagers” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 83, the “Wildcats” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 131, the “Screwtops” of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 123, the “Zappers” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 130, the “Dusty Dogs” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 7, the “Swamp Foxes” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 74 and the “Rawhides” of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40.

SECNAV Del Toro Names Future Medical Ship USNS Balboa (EMS

2)

Release from Secretary of the Navy Public Affairs

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27 October 2023

SAN DIEGO – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced today that a future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship will be named USNS Balboa (EMS 2), during a ceremony at Naval Medical Center San Diego, Oct. 27.

The future USNS Balboa honors the legacy and commitment of Navy doctors, nurses, corpsmen, and staff of Balboa Naval Hospital in caring for the needs of U.S. Service Members.

“The contributions of this medical center over the past 100 years, represented by the care its personnel delivers to our Sailors, Marines, and families, are absolutely incredible. This hospital’s personnel continue to conduct ground-breaking medical research, discover new and innovative approaches to the delivery of world-class medical care, and provides a medical residency program for over a dozen medical specialties to develop our next generation of military doctors,” said Secretary Del Toro. “The guiding principle of Navy Medicine is to align its people and platforms in order to enhance warfighter health, wellness, and performance. I can say, with full confidence, that Naval Medical Center San Diego achieves this on a daily basis.”

The name selection follows the tradition of naming expeditionary medical ships after U.S. military hospitals.

As the informal name for Naval Medical Center San Diego, “Balboa” began as a naval hospital tent erected in December 1914 in support of the Panama-California Exposition (1915–1917) held in San Diego’s Balboa Park. When the United

States entered World War I, the Navy converted the deserted exposition grounds into a training center containing a war dispensary and a camp hospital. In September 1919, San Diego officials set aside 17.35 acres of the park at Inspiration Point for the construction of a permanent naval hospital, often referred to as the "Pink Palace," for its stucco façade. Commissioned in 1922, the complex added a hospital corpsman school in 1928 and continued to grow throughout World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, adding a surgical building, medical library, and outpatient clinic over time. By the early 1970s, the Balboa complex was among the largest military hospitals in the world. A new hospital compound to replace aging structures was completed in 1988 on land adjacent to Inspiration Point with the former site reverting to the City. Today, Balboa leads the way as one of the largest naval medical teaching and research facilities in the nation, in addition to supporting five medical mobilization teams and USNS Mercy (T-AH 19).

In addition, Secretary Del Toro announced that Mrs. Deborah Paxton, MSN, RN, agreed to be the ship's sponsor. Mrs. Paxton, wife of retired Marine Corps General John Paxton, the 33rd Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, has spent her life in support of the Marine Corps and a decade of work serving the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment as the mental health advisor to the regiment.

"I am beyond grateful that Secretary Del Toro chose me for this great honor, and I pledge my commitment to USNS Balboa and her crew," said Deborah Paxton. "I feel such confidence and comfort knowing that EMS 2 will operate where Marines and Sailors are engaged in either combat or humanitarian relief providing access to world-class medical care in critical times."

Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed as a dedicated medical ship that optimizes hospital-level medical

care in support of distributed maritime operations (DMO). EMS will feature a shallow draft enabling greater reach and allowing direct access to shallow austere ports, while also providing a flight deck that accommodates military helicopters. This design provides a full range of medical capabilities including triage/critical care, three operating rooms, medical laboratory, radiological capability, blood bank, dental, mental health, OB/GYN and primary care, rapid stabilization and follow-on evacuation of multiple casualties and combat search and rescue including recovery at sea. The primary mission of the EMS as a high-speed forward-deployed medical ship is to provide rapid responsive sea-based and near-shore hospital level critical care, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations and special operations. The EMS is designed to respond and provide care at a more rapid pace than their predecessors, USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort, sailing at speeds of at least 30 knots with a range of 5,500 nautical miles at 24 knots.