Marine Corps Orders 36 More Amphibious Combat Vehicles

U.S. Marine Corps amphibious combat vehicles with 3d Assault

Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, conduct movement on the shore after a successful training evolution at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, March 13. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / 2nd Lt. Joshua Estrada*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps has ordered 36 more Amphibious Combat Vehicles, the Defense Department announced March 25.

Marine Corps Systems Command, Quantico, Virginia, awarded BAE Systems Land & Armaments L.P., Sterling Heights, Michigan, a $173.6 million contract modification for a full-rate production lot of ACVs and "associated production, and fielding and support costs." The deliveries are expected to be completed by March 2024.

The ACV is an amphibious armored vehicle – with a crew of three Marines – designed to carry 13 Marines in shock-mounted seats from ship to shore in an opposed landing and to carry those Marines inland. Its V-shaped hull is designed to provide blast protection from mines.

In addition to the personnel carrier versions (ACV-P), BAE Systems has delivered the prototype of the command variant (ACV-C) and is under contract to design and develop the 30mm cannon-armed variant (ACV-30) and the recovery variant (ACV-R).

The contract raises the number of ACV-Ps ordered so far to more than 250. They are in full-rate production.

The ACV achieved initial operational capability on Nov. 13, 2020. The ACV is replacing the AAV7 family of assault amphibious vehicles that have been in service since the early 1970s.

HII Christens Flight III Destroyer Jack H. Lucas

HII christened the pre-commissioning unit Jack H. Lucas on March 26. *HII*

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII christened pre-commissioning unit Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125) on March 26 at the company's Ingalls Shipbuilding division, the company said in a release.

Jack H. Lucas, a longtime resident of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, was the youngest Marine and youngest service member in World War II awarded the Medal of Honor. During a close firefight with Japanese soldiers, Lucas saved the lives of three Marines when he unhesitatingly placed himself on two grenades.

"Jack H. Lucas made a selfless decision to choose others and country over self," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. "Our Ingalls shipbuilders have a deep appreciation and respect for what sailors and Marines do on behalf of our nation. We are proud to support them and to provide them this remarkable ship, our first Flight III destroyer."

Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Mike Gilday, was the keynote speaker.

“Jack H. Lucas is not only the most capable and sophisticated surface combatant ever built by man, but it also represents the bridge from the past to the future, as we bring a new radar, the Aegis Baseline 10, and a new electric plant onto an already highly capable platform,” Gilday said. “Such an evolution would be impossible without the shipbuilders of Huntington Ingalls Industries and the Pascagoula community. Flight III represents the dedication and commitment of our Sailors and civilians – the skill and innovation of our shipyards and industry partners – and the commitment of the American people to keep the seas free and open for all.”

“You have built the finest destroyer in the world,” Gilday said.

Jack H. Lucas is cosponsored by Ruby Lucas, widow of the ship’s namesake, and Catherine B. Reynolds, chairman and CEO of the Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation. Together, the two sponsors officially christened the ship and made remarks during the ceremony.

“May the Jack H. Lucas be indestructible, just like he was,” Ruby Lucas said. “This first of its kind ship is advanced in integrity, courage and commitment to serve our great country. Jack never ran from a fight, and I’m certain that all aboard his namesake will represent Jack with honor. Just as I feel his spirit with me, be assured that he will be with all of you all the time.”

U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker and U.S. Rep. Steven Palazzo, both of Mississippi, delivered remarks. Other speakers included Meredith Berger, performing the duties of undersecretary of the Navy, and Maj. Gen. Jason Bohm, commanding general, Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

U.S. Coast Guard Decommissions Three Cutters in Bahrain

USCGC Monomoy (WPB 1326), USCGC Maui (WPB 1304), and USCGC Wrangell (WPB 1332) sit pierside in the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY BAHRAIN – The U.S. Coast Guard decommissioned three Island-class patrol boats, March 22, in a ceremony at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

Rear Adm. Keith Smith, deputy commander of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, attended the ceremony and commemorated 102 years of combined active service by USCGC Maui (WPB 1304),

Monomoy (WPB 1326), and Wrangell (WPB 1332).

“For nearly two decades, these cutters and the Coast Guardsmen that crewed them have worked closely with our [U.S. Naval Forces Central Command] partners and served as the heart of Coast Guard operations in the Middle East,” said Smith.

Maui was originally homeported in Miami and conducted counter-narcotics and other law enforcement activities near United States for 18 years.

Monomoy was previously homeported in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. The ship helped secure New York City’s harbor immediately following terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.

In 2004, Maui and Monomoy arrived in the U.S. 5th Fleet region where they have remained for the next 18 years in support of U.S. 5th Fleet maritime security operations.

Previously homeported in Portland, Maine, Wrangell conducted counter-narcotics and maritime patrol operations along the East Coast of the United States before deploying to the Middle East in 2003.

Navy to Christen Guided-Missile Destroyer Jack H. Lucas

The future Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer (Flight III configuration) successfully launched at Huntington Ingalls Industries, Ingalls Shipbuilding division, June 4, 2021. *HUNTINGTON*

INGALLS INDUSTRIES

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy will christen the future USS Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), the first Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, during a 10 a.m. CDT ceremony on Saturday, March 26, in Pascagoula, Mississippi, the Defense Department announced.

Jacklyn Harold "Jack" Lucas, the ship's namesake, served as a U.S. Marine during World War II and was awarded the Medal of Honor at the age of 17, making him the youngest recipient. Private First Class Lucas received the award during the Iwo Jima campaign when he hurled himself on two grenades to absorb the explosion with his own body and protect his fellow Marines. Surviving the blast, Lucas lived until June 5, 2008, when he died from cancer. The future USS Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125) is the first combat warship to bear his name.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday will deliver the christening ceremony's principal address. Mississippi's Sen. Roger Wicker and Rep. Steven Palazzo will attend, along with Meredith Berger, performing the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy; Maj. Gen. Jason Bohm, commanding general, Marine Corps Recruiting Command; and Kari Wilkinson, president of Ingalls Shipbuilding will also provide remarks. In Navy tradition, the ship's sponsors, Ruby Lucas and Catherine B. Reynolds, will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

"The future USS Jack H. Lucas will serve as a constant reminder of the immense impact actions taken by any one Sailor or Marine can truly have," said Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro. "Private First Class Lucas is a national hero and this ship and crew will honor his legacy for decades to come."

The ship will be the 73rd Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and is one of 20 ships currently under contract for the DDG 51 program. The Flight III upgrade is centered on the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar, which enables

Flight III ships to perform anti-air warfare and ballistic missile defense simultaneously. The Flight III baseline begins with DDGs 125-126 and continues with DDG 128 and follow-on ships. The future USS Jack H. Lucas will be 509.5 feet long and 59 feet wide, with a displacement of 9,496 tons. The ship will homeport in San Diego.

HII Authenticates Keel of Guided Missile Destroyer Ted Stevens (DDG 128)

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division authenticated the keel of the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer Ted Stevens (DDG 128), the company announced March 25.

The ship's name honors former U.S. Senator Ted Stevens, who served as a pilot in World War II and later as a senator representing Alaska. At the time he left office in 2009, he was the longest serving Republican U.S. senator in history.

"With this ship we honor Sen. Stevens' exemplary service to our nation," said Kari Wilkinson, president of the Ingalls Shipbuilding division. She was joined at the ceremony by the senator's wife of 29 years, Catherine Stevens, his eldest daughter, Sue Stevens Covich, and his granddaughter, Laura Sexton, who represented his youngest daughter, Lily Stevens-Becker, who could not attend. "Each one of these women has a unique connection to our ship's namesake," Wilkinson said, "and we are grateful that each of them accepted the important responsibility of sponsor. Ingalls shipbuilders welcome them as part of our extended family and we will work steadfastly

together to build the legacy of this public servant.”

Closing out the tradition of a keel authentication ceremony, the ship’s sponsors joined Ingalls welder Henry Johnson to weld their initials onto a steel plate, signifying the keel of DDG 128 as being “truly and fairly laid.” The plate will remain affixed to the ship throughout its lifetime.

Ted Stevens is the 76th Arleigh Burke-class ship ceremonially laid and the second Flight III destroyer to be constructed at Ingalls Shipbuilding. The Flight III upgrade incorporates a number of design modifications that collectively provide significantly enhanced capability.

Bollinger Delivers the Future USCGC Pablo Valent

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Pablo Valent, delivered to the Coast Guard on March 17. *BOLLINGER SHIPYARDS*

LOCKPORT, La. – Bollinger Shipyards LLC delivered the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Pablo Valent to the service in Key West on March 17, the company said in a release.

This is the 174th vessel Bollinger has delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard over a 35-year period and the 48th fast response cutter delivered under the current program.

“The early delivery of the USCGC Pablo Valent is another win in Bollinger’s nearly four-decade partnership supporting the men and women of the United States Coast Guard,” said Bollinger president and CEO Ben Bordelon. “We are incredibly proud that the FRC platform is a model program for government acquisition and has surpassed all historical quality benchmarks for vessels of this type and complexity. The results are in the detail and the continued early delivery of truly extraordinary Coast Guard cutters that will serve our

nation for decades to come.”

The USCGC Pablo Valent is the first of three FRCs to be homeported in St. Petersburg, Florida. Sector St. Petersburg has become one of the Coast Guard’s largest commands, with an area of responsibility encompassing over 400 nautical miles of coastline along Florida’s west coast and the third largest U.S. port for domestic trade. The sector has responsibility for five primary operational missions: search and rescue; marine safety; maritime law enforcement; ports, waterways and coastal security; and living marine resources.

This week, President Joe Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal 2022, which included $130 million for two additional FRCs, continuing the program beyond its 64-vessel program of record. This is the second time Congress has added FRCs beyond the original 58 vessel program of record.

Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. The Florida Keys Hurricane of September 1919 was one of the worst in Texas history, heavily damaging the Brazos Life-Saving Station and leveling the Coast Guard Station at nearby Aransas. Seventy-seven-ton schooner Cape Horn had been fishing far out in the Gulf as the storm descended on the schooner and its crew of eight, capsizing the vessel and flooding the hold. The men clung to the flooded hulk as the strong hurricane pushed it toward the Texas coast.

The Brazos Station lookout spotted the Cape Horn and took immediate action. The crew launched the surfboat in some of the worst sea conditions ever experienced in the area. Although the men were skilled surfmen, the boat shipped seas constantly as waves boarded the vessel from the stern. Pablo Valent and the rest of the crew held the boat steady and safely landed with all 15 occupants. For their valiant efforts, Valent and the rest of the Brazos crew received the

Silver Life-Saving Medal. Valent went on to have a successful career in the Coast Guard, taking command of the Brazos Station (a.k.a. Port Isabel Coast Guard Station) in 1935, becoming the first Hispanic American in the service to do so. Valent retired after 28 years of service in the Coast Guard.

Navy's New Hovercraft Delivers Helicopter for Air Force

Skip Whitmore, Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City, marshals a Landing Craft Air Cushion vehicle onto shore south of Hurlburt Field, Florida, Feb. 24. The amphibious landing craft carried a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter from Pensacola to be used for training purposes within Eglin Air Force Base range. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Samuel King Jr.*

ARLINGTON, Va. — An unusual transport mission last month demonstrated the capabilities and versatility of the Navy's new LCAC 100-class ship-to-shore connector.

The Air Force 96th Test Wing at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, requested the assistance of the Naval Surface Warfare Center – Panama City Division to solve a problem in transporting a CH-46 helicopter from Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, to Eglin. The retired helicopter was to be used to "support future training operations for the Air Force Special Operations Command Special Tactics Training Squadron," Jeremy Roman of the NSWC PCD public affairs office said in a March 23 release.

"With a height of nearly 17 feet, transporting the helicopter by land would have required extensive preparation work in order to lower the height to safely maneuver on public highways," Roman said.

The 96th Test Wing and the NSWC PCD determined the best solution was using one of the LCAC 100-class ship-to-shore connectors, which recently entered fleet service, to transport the helicopter over the water to Eglin.

LCAC 103, the third production LCC 100-class SSC, was selected for the mission, conducted on Feb. 24.

"LCAC 103 transited from Panama City, Florida, to NAS Pensacola where the CH-46 was loaded and then transported to Eglin AFB," Roman said. "The LCAC 103 then displayed its amphibious capability by transiting from water to shore at Eglin AFB where the CH-46 was rolled off the deck onto dry land. LCAC 103 further demonstrated the SSC amphibious capabilities by transiting across Santa Rosa Island at the Eglin AFB Test Range to navigate back to base via the most efficient route to NSWC PCD. This long-distance, land-hopping mission, supported post-delivery test and trials objectives by successfully gaining reliability growth hours while demonstrating required capabilities for Navy and Marine Corps expeditionary forces."

"NSWC PCD is a Navy research, development, test and evaluation

laboratory, and this mission displayed the fruit of the RDT&E and acquisition teamwork which is providing this critical expeditionary capability to the fleet. It is always a bonus when that capability supports our sister military branches and partners," said Randy Whitehead, NSWC PCD Air Cushion Vehicle and Seabasing technical program manager, in the release.

"This was an excellent demonstration of key capabilities such as the LCAC's unique combination of range, speed, amphibious versatility and lift capacity. It not only allowed us to successfully execute this mission but also showed how SSC can bring more to the table for future Distributed Maritime Operations."

The LCAC 100-class SSC is built by Textron Systems and is replacing the older LCAC 01 class hovercraft in the fleet. Testing of the LCAC 100 craft is conducted at NSWC PCD. Recently, two LCAC 100s were delivered to the fleet's Assault Craft Unit 4 at Little Creek, Virginia.

Israeli Air Force Leader Takes Flight in CH-53K

Brig. Gen. Eyal Grinboim, Israeli air force chief of staff, along with his staff, discuss the capabilities of the CH-53K prior to flying on the aircraft. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Israeli air force Chief of Staff Brig. Gen. Eyal Grinboim visited Naval Air Station Patuxent River in February for a program update and flight on the CH-53K heavy lift helicopter, Naval Air Systems Command said March 23.

Grinboim and his staff met with Maj. Gen. Gregory Masiello, program executive officer for air anti-submarine warfare, assault and special mission programs. Masiello and Col. Jack Perrin, program manager, Heavy Lift Program Office (PMA-261), gave the IAF group an overview of the CH-53K program and a status update on current tests and production.

The visit included an opportunity to co-pilot the aircraft. U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Luke Frank, pilot and officer in charge of CH-53K detachment for Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1, provided pre-flight safety instructions before leading the group in a flight. The flight demonstrated the power and capabilities of the CH-53K aircraft.

Grinboim’s visit to the program office was the first since Israel’s decision last year to purchase the CH-53K. The IAF

signed a letter of offer and acceptance on Dec. 30, 2021, with the U.S. government. The agreement is for purchase of 12 CH-53K aircraft with first deliveries planned in 2025.

As the long-range logistic support backbone for the U.S. Marine Corps, the CH-53K will support Israeli special operations programs first, as well as provide the Israeli Defense Forces with a platform that has the speed, safety and gross weight capability to support all of its missions, including troop and cargo transport, and search and rescue.

The CH-53K program is on track to achieve Initial Operational Capability in 2022. VMX-1 completed all initial operational test and evaluation scheduled events, including a real-world, non-test event recovering a 14,000-pound downed Navy H-60 from a 12,000 feet high zone in the mountains of Northern California. The CH-53K will transport Marines, heavy equipment and supplies during ship-to-shore movement in support of amphibious assault and subsequent operations ashore.

Navy’s E-2D Distributed Readiness Trainers Improving Readiness, Capability

Naval aviators train on E-2D distributed readiness trainers, which are training devices capable of elements of two, five crewmember aircraft to conduct a single training scenario simultaneously and execute the full list of tactics, techniques, and procedures. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The aircrew from Carrier Airborne Command & Control Squadron 125 (VAW-125), an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye squadron, recently completed two weeks of on-site readiness training following the installation of two E-2D Distributed Readiness Trainers by the Naval Aviation Training Systems and Ranges program office, Naval Air Systems Command said March 23.

These medium-fidelity trainers contain a complete mock-up of the E-2D weapons system and are available via commercial off-the-shelf components, allowing them to be operational faster than higher fidelity trainers. The D-DRT uses touch screen technology and are less expensive to maintain than the legacy trainers, which improves reliability and reduces lifecycle costs.

“Our ability to cycle through reps and sets of advanced tactics, techniques and procedures in a short amount of time will make the warfighter more lethal at a much lower cost to the taxpayer,” said David Adams, PMA-205 Training Systems integrated product team lead.

The devices were installed to coincide with the squadron’s return from deployment, for use immediately upon return. PMA-205 team members were on hand to provide instruction on their operation.

“The event provided VAW-125 an increased level of combat readiness and the ability to maintain combat effectiveness without costly travel to traditional training locations,” said PMA-205 program manager, Capt. Lisa Sullivan.

A multidisciplinary PMA-205 team conducted the training and provided aircrew with “hands-on” instruction to learn how to operate the devices and get the most out of their training. The trainers can accommodate an E-2D element of two five-crewmember aircraft to conduct a single training scenario simultaneously and execute the full list of tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Cmdr. Ryan Mann, executive officer of the E-2 Weapons School, said, “These devices have received a significant amount of positive feedback from the E-2D community, and it is very excited about its capabilities.” Future developments and iterations of the D-DRT will add additional capability to improve readiness.

Navy’s Two-Carrier Block Buy Stabilized Supplier Base During COVID Pandemic, Industry Exec Says

USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) transits the James River after leaving Newport News Shipyard during sea and anchor, Feb. 25, 2022. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean after completing the industrial portion of a six-month planned incremental availability. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob Mattingly*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy’s procurement and congressional funding of two Ford-class aircraft carriers in a single block buy enabled numerous small suppliers to weather or even survive the COVID pandemic, an industry official said. The stability of the program also enabled the aircraft carrier industrial base to control costs and enact savings.

Stable and predictable funding provided by the block procurement of CVN 80 and CVN 81, in place before the pandemic, gave the aircraft carrier industrial base the ability to absorb the shock of the pandemic, especially for the small lower-tier suppliers, said Rick Giannini, chairman of the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition and CEO of Milwaukee Valve, speaking March 22 in a phone conference with *Seapower*.

“The two-carrier buy was really very helpful to the supply base [during the pandemic], because those orders in the hands of the suppliers before COVID gave them the work to get through things,” Giannini said.

Giannini said the ACIBC’s top priority is “stable and predictable funding,” which he defined as “a two-carrier block buy over eight years, with carriers purchased on four-year centers.

“And with that comes advance planning funding early in the cycle,” which he said “really is the catalyst. It’s great to have the bulk buy, but if we don’t have the funds to go and buy those raw materials as a supply base, it makes it very difficult to enact the savings that come out of it. We got good funding for [CVNs] 80 and 81, and one of the lessons is we need more early on so we can get more of the supply base involved.”

Giannini cited the experience of his own company, Milwaukee Valve.

“We were able to buy all of the materials for two full shipsets up front. Now we have that material in our facility so that the lead times not be impacted by material problems. Nor will the cost change. And it saves significant dollars and will improve the lead times overall.”

He said a two-carrier block buy is “very doable. We’re hoping we can get it moved up into 2024 – eight years after the AP

[advance procurement] money came in for 80/81. We're really trying to match the procurement of the Nimitz class. They were built on 3.5-year centers. So, four [-year centers] is good enough."

The carrier industrial base coalition includes 2,000 companies from 46 states that employ approximately 121,000 workers. Its member companies provide $9.6 billion worth of materials and services for one aircraft carrier.

Workforce issues became prominent during the pandemic because many "baby boomer" workers retired earlier than planned. A shortage of skilled workers is focusing companies on recruiting and developing shipyard and manufacturing workers. Many companies are forming partnerships with local community and technical colleges and trade schools.

Giannini's Milwaukee Valve company's workforce is down about 8% in personnel, he said. Also, he noted that when a worker contracted COVID-19, about 10 other workers around that worker had to be quarantined, greatly affecting workflow for a week or two at a time. Absenteeism had risen to about 8 to 10 points on a fairly consistent basis, he said.

Giannini attended the dinner March 21 – sponsored by the Navy League –with Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday in Norfolk, Virginia, to celebrate the centennial of the U.S. Navy's first aircraft carrier, where, he noted, the CNO said the Navy needed a force level of 12 aircraft carriers.