Sikorsky Awarded Contract to Sustain Navy, Marine Super Stallion, Sea Dragon Helicopters

STRATFORD, Conn. – Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, was awarded a performance-based logistics contract with a value of $717 million to provide supply and logistics support to the entire fleet of in-service CH-53E Super Stallions and MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters, the company said in a Nov. 5 release.

The H-53E is a battle-proven heavy-lift helicopter continuing to support the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy in missions at home and around the world.

The scope of the contract includes repairs, overhauls, spares, obsolescence mitigation and asset management services over four years. Contract performance is based on material availability metrics with additional incentives added for demand reductions, maintainability enhancements and aircraft readiness contributions.

The expanded comprehensive arrangement will cover additional readiness-critical components, including main and tail rotor blades, main gearbox, main rotor head and flight control components, as well as accessories such as refueling probe and cargo system components.

“We expect the expanded performance-based logistics to measurably improve material availability and reduce support cost while increasing overall aircraft readiness,” said Pierre Garant, Sikorsky senior program manager, Marine Corps In-Service Programs. “Our support infrastructure and past performance-based logistics successes will result in Sikorsky continuing to reliably provide mission support critical to the

warfighter.”

As the Marine Corps’ heavy lift-helicopter designed for the transportation of heavy material and supplies, the CH-53E Super Stallion is compatible with most amphibious class ships. With four-and-one-half hours’ endurance, the helicopter can move heavy equipment over rugged terrain in bad weather and at night. The MH-53E Sea Dragon fills the Navy’s need for long-range minesweeping missions, in addition to heavy-lift duties. The H-53E has consistently proven its worth to the fleet commanders with its versatility and range.

The contract will provide the vital and affordable support to the entire fleet – expanding a reliable base of long-term sustainment as the aircraft continue to fully operate until the introduction of the replacement aircraft, the Sikorsky CH-53K King Stallion.

Vigilant Returns Home Following 63-Day Caribbean Patrol

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant returned home Nov. 6 to Cape Canaveral following a 63-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Vigilant concluded the patrol in which the crew conducted numerous at-sea vessel boardings to ensure the safety of life at sea and enforce U.S. federal laws. The crew also worked with partner nations to enhance national security and stability throughout the Caribbean basin.

During the crew’s two months at sea, they detected and interdicted two drug trafficking vessels, detained seven smugglers, and seized over $700,000 worth of narcotics. The Vigilant crew worked closely with representatives from the Bahamas and Haiti to effect prosecution of the suspected criminals.

The Vigilant crew also saved the lives of three men who had been lost at sea for over six days. The men’s sailboat was caught in a gale, blown over 100 miles from shore, and then becalmed. The survivors had been without water for two days when they were found by the Vigilant crew. After giving them necessary medical attention, the crew returned the survivors safely to their home country.

The Vigilant is a multimission 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include illegal drug and migrant interdiction, as well as search and rescue. The Vigilant patrols throughout the Caribbean basin to ensure safety of life at sea and to enforce international and domestic laws.

Huntington Ingalls Receives Contract Modification for First Columbia-Class Sub

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries announced Nov. 6 that its Newport News Shipbuilding division has been awarded a $197 million modification to a previously awarded contract from General Dynamics Electric Boat to provide long-lead-time material and advance construction activities for the first Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine.

The advance procurement funds will be used to purchase major components and commodity material and to begin advance construction on Columbia (SSBN 826). Newport News is a major subcontractor for the construction of the new class of ballistic-missile submarines, which are being designed to replace the Ohio-class submarines.

“This contract modification is critical in engaging the submarine industrial base as we continue our efforts to support starting full construction in fiscal year 2021,” said Jason Ward, Newport News’ vice president for Columbia-class construction.

Construction of the 12-submarine Columbia class is expected to begin in fiscal 2021, with the first delivery to the Navy in 2028.

Leonardo to Equip the New German K130 Corvettes with OTO 76/62 Gun

ROME — Leonardo, a Finmeccanica company, was selected to provide the OTO 76 mm/62-caliber gun for the German Navy’s new K130 corvettes, the company said in a Nov. 1 release

The OTO 76/62 SR (Super Rapid) system is a best in class in its segment, in use with almost 60 navies worldwide. It has recently successfully completed an extensive vulnerability assessment campaign ensuring its resilience to cyberattacks. Managed by a state-of-the-art control console maximizing its performances, the system can be integrated on any type and class of ship, including smaller units

Leonardo signed a contract with the Bundesamt für Ausrüstung, Informationstechnik und Nutzung der Bundeswehr, the German Federal Office in charge of defense acquisitions, to provide seven OTO 76/62 SR systems that will equip the new K130 corvettes of the German Navy. The contract also includes training and spare parts supply.
With this new acquisition, Leonardo's naval gun becomes the reference defense system for the German Navy, which has already tested the capabilities of the compact version of the system, integrated on the first batch of corvettes following a previous contract.

Buono Named New U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Superintendent

WASHINGTON – Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby announced Jack Buono as the new superintendent for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Nov. 2. Buono will take command at the academy on Nov. 9. He most recently served as president and CEO of ExxonMobil's shipping subsidiary, SeaRiver Maritime Inc.

"As a Kings Point graduate who spent his entire career in maritime leadership roles, Mr. Buono will help educate and inspire the next generation of maritime cadets," Buzby said.

Following his graduation from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Buono worked his way up from a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed third mate to an unlimited master mariner with ExxonMobil Corp. In 1991, he transferred ashore and, after rising through several management positions, was elected to president and CEO of SeaRiver, where he served until his retirement in 2016 after 38 years with ExxonMobil and

SeaRiver.

“Jack Buono is the ideal candidate to take the Academy to the next level,” Buzby said. “He has impeccable credentials on the waterfront and, as an alumnus, fully understands the academy’s mission to provide its students with the highest caliber of training and education needed to lead afloat and ashore.”

Buono received a Bachelor of Science in marine transportation with a minor in management from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1978 and was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, where he served for 11 years.

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York is one of the five federal service academies. This year, it celebrates its 75th anniversary, having been dedicated in September 1943 to provide the nation with a steady source of highly trained merchant marine officers and naval reserve officers. Today, graduates serve not only in the commercial merchant marine, but also on active duty in all branches of the armed forces.

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration is responsible for overseeing the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, including the hiring of key academy positions. As part of the selection process, Buono met with a number of midshipmen, faculty and staff from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, in addition to alumni and industry leaders.

Elbit Selected to Provide

Maritime UAS to the European Maritime Safety Agency

HAIFA, Israel – Elbit Systems Ltd. has been awarded a framework contract for maritime unmanned aircraft system (UAS) patrol services to be provided by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to countries in the European Union, the company said in a Nov. 1 release. The contract is for a two-year base period and two single-year option periods. If fully ordered, the total contract value is approximately $68 million.

Under the contract, and in cooperation with CEiiA, a leading engineering company in Portugal, Elbit Systems will lease and operate its Hermes 900 maritime patrol UAS and its ground control station. A persistent long-range unmanned maritime surveillance system tailored for littoral and blue water operations, the Hermes 900 will feature maritime radar, an electro-optic payload, satellite communication and an automatic identification system receiver. Thus configured, the Hermes 900 will enable persistent monitoring of vast swathes of sea and long coastlines and effective identification of suspicious activities and potential hazards.

“Having been selected by the European Union authorities is yet another vote of confidence in the Hermes 900 by following additional contract awards for this UAS in Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin America and Israel,” said Elad Aharonson, general manager of Elbit Systems ISTAR Division. “Extensively deployed, the Hermes 900 family of UAS continuously expands its capabilities introducing the capability to operate in civilian airspace and integrating self-protection suites and stronger payloads.”

UTC Aerospace Systems Develops World's Highest-Resolution SWIR Camera for ONR

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Under a contract with the Office of Naval Research (ONR), UTC Aerospace Systems' Sensors Unlimited business has developed the world's highest-resolution indium gallium arsenide Near Infrared/Shortwave Infrared (NIR/SWIR) imaging sensor, the company announced Oct. 31.

The new sensor includes a 16-megapixel photo-detector array on a 5-micron pitch, providing roughly 16 times more detail than the company's existing high-definition sensor, released in 2012, which has a resolution of 1.3 megapixels. UTC Aerospace Systems is a unit of United Technologies Corp.

The first-of-its-kind sensor is hybridized to a matching silicon Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor read-out integrated circuit and packaged into a hermetically sealed focal plane array. Imaging electronics were also designed and developed to integrate the focal plane array into a complete imaging camera.

Per ONR's requirement, the sensor is compatible with the RQ-21A payload SWAP (size, weight and power) envelope and offers the following capabilities:

■ High coverage rate spectral sensing in the SWIR band.
■ Ability to continuously monitor a wide area activity at a resolution (temporal and spatial) consistent with dismount detection/tracking.
■ High fidelity inspection sensing in both of the above collection modes.
■ Autonomous identification of objects, behaviors and

materials of interest with accuracy rates high enough to enable a useful real-time dissemination of information directly to warfighters.

UTC Aerospace Systems developed the sensor for the U.S. Navy's Spectral and Reconnaissance Imagery for Tactical Exploitation (SPRITE) program and has delivered four prototypes to the service as part of a three-year, $9.7 million award.

"Our newest SWIR camera uses groundbreaking technology to provide operators with a higher resolution and greater level of detail than ever before," said Michael Daugherty, program manager, UTC Aerospace Systems. "For the warfighter, this means an improved ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] situational awareness capability. We're honored to support the U.S. Navy and look forward to continuing to support the SPRITE program in the years ahead."

Panelists Argue Current Pentagon Spending Conflicts with Likely Future Needs

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has a serious problem in that providing what it needs for the forces to be ready for current and likely near-term conflicts can clash with what it requires to prepare for the return of great power competition, a panel of former civilian defense officials and current military officers said.

In a Nov. 2 forum on military readiness at the Brookings Institution, the debate was framed by the questions of "ready for what?" and "ready for when?" These raised the conflict

between increasing current readiness for the low-level fights against extremists and modernizing for great power competition with Russia and China.

The two former senior defense officials agreed that what the military is buying with the recent significantly higher budgets is not what it will need to confront Russia and China.

Mara Karlin, whose decades of Pentagon service ended as deputy assistant defense secretary for strategy and force development, criticized the Navy's drive for a multipurpose 355-ship fleet when it should be focusing on increased undersea capabilities that would give it a competitive advantage against the emerging peer adversaries.

Karlin also questioned how much the Marine Corps is spending on aviation, which is focused on reversing a currently low readiness condition, and called the Air Force's spending portfolio "totally messed up." She did like the thrust of the Army's newly created Futures Command, which appears aimed primarily at acquiring the capabilities it would need to counter peer competitors.

"There are all kinds of ways we're not spending on what we need," Karlin said.

Alan Estevez, whose 36 years in the Pentagon ended as principal deputy undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics, said the current enlarged budget "is buying what was in the pipeline, which probably are not the right things."

There is not enough in research and development for things like lasers and hypersonics, he said, and "we have to be prepared to fight with 1s and 0s, cyber. We do not have the tools, the modernization, required for great power conflict."

Karlin and Estevez agreed that the new National Defense Strategy presented by Defense Secretary James Mattis was "spot

on” in its declaration that the top mission of the military was preparing for the return of great power competition, naming Russia and China.

Two federal executive fellows at Brookings, Marine Col. Amy Ebitz and Navy Cmdr. Brendan Stickles, focused on their service experiences, particularly noting the negative impacts of the years of constrained budgets under the threat of sequestration and the inefficiencies imposed by the years of continuing resolutions instead of on-time appropriations.

Stickles, an electronic warfare pilot who recently commanded an EF-18G Growler squadron, cited the report several years ago that only one-third of the Navy’s FA-18 Super Hornets were combat ready. Although “we’ve made progress” with just over now ready, “that’s not a good statistic.”

He also pointed out that early this year there was no aircraft carrier at sea, which required a B-2 bomber to fly from Missouri to drop a bomb in Afghanistan, “a job that should have been performed by a carrier.”

Ebitz, whose career has been in law enforcement and force protection, said that compared to the current enemy, the Marines “absolutely are ready. They’re out there every day doing what is required.” But, she said, the high operational demands and the past budget constraints have hurt the Corps’ ability to prepare for the future.

“It goes to the ‘ready for what?’” she said. “We haven’t always been accurate on that. We not only have to be ready for today, the anti-terrorist fight, but for the future,” she said.

Ebitz said the Marine Corps’ priorities are “increasing our own lethality, building partnerships and ensuring the flow of equipment.” But most important, she said, “was our personnel,” giving them more time between deployments to spend with their families and train for the future fight.

U.S., Canadian Forces Wrap Up Vigilant Shield 19

OAK HARBOR, Wash. – As the sun crept over the Olympic Mountains Oct. 27, Sailors assigned to Explosive Ordnance Mobile Unit (EODMU) 1 assembled their gear on the shore. Their mission – find, render safe, and exploit inert training mines to protect the harbor during mine countermeasure operations during exercise Vigilant Shield 19.

"The purpose of this exercise is to implement our homeland defense strategy," said Lt. j.g. James Knox, platoon leader from EODMU 1's Platoon 122, according to a release from U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). "We are working together with other services and nations to mitigate the hazards of mines and/or improvised explosive devices."

VS 19 is a binational exercise between the United States and Canada designed to assess and enhance the readiness of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), USNORTHCOM, Canadian Joint Operations Command, their components, and mission partners to defend the homelands from attack. This year marked the 13th iteration of the annual homeland defense exercise which ran from Oct. 24–28.

The maritime exercise, which was led by USNORTHCOM's Navy component command, U.S. Navy North, deployed U.S. and Canadian maritime assets and personnel to Puget Sound for mine countermeasure operations. This exercise provided crucial training opportunities to improve interoperability and to demonstrate the U.S. and Canada's ability to defend North America in a binational environment. Their mission set included the location and exploitation of simulated mines in

domestic waterways.

“Maintaining open ports is vital to our national interests,” said Rear Adm. Dave Welch, commander of Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC). “The maritime component of this exercise provided our teams the opportunity to work together to maintain and increase our capabilities.”

Operationally, Welch leads SMWDC’s Mine Warfare Division’s Mine Warfare Battle Staff as the U.S. Navy’s Theater Mine Warfare commander or Global Mine Warfare commander. In this role, he leads or supports mine warfare operations in every numbered fleet and combatant command area of responsibility.

The maritime environment is inherently complex and NORAD and USNORTHCOM leverage timely information sharing with an array of American, Canadian, allied and interagency partners to close gaps and seams in the maritime environment.

Back in Puget Sound, platoon leader Knox reflected on the importance of mine warfare domestically at the tactical level.

“In harbors like San Francisco, San Diego, and here in the Pacific Northwest, it is important that we [the military] and the merchant ships have freedom of movement,” Knox said. “We need to make sure that commercial vessels don’t have a reason to be afraid to deliver goods on a daily basis.”

During the exercise, Knox and his team located inert, simulated mines and towed them to the beach via rigid-hull inflatable boat so the team could run various tests on the devices. While challenging, the various teams working together including elements of Mine Countermeasures Squadron 3 and Mine Countermeasures Division 31 were able to achieve their training objectives.

“The key challenge of these exercises is that we want to locate the mine and exploit it,” said Senior Chief Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Justin Lewis. “Practicing these

skills in the cold waters of the Pacific Northwest ensures that we can respond to a threat anywhere, under any conditions."

Adding to the challenges provided by the weather conditions was the need to fully examine and exploit the inert training mine – not something that can be done where the mine lays in the water.

"We don't want to neutralize the mine where it sits," said Lewis. "We wanted to get it on land so we could run forensic tests to figure out what kind of mine it is. The scenario for this was that the Oak Harbor area was all mined, and in the unlikely event that this happened, we would be able to operate accordingly."

According to Knox, teamwork and practice are integral to maintaining the skills necessary to keep waterways open and safe. Neutralizing and dispensing of any threat that is found quickly is a high priority as there are many people and wildlife that call this region home.

USNORTHCOM partners to conduct homeland defense, civil support and security cooperation to defend and secure the United States and its interests. USNORTHCOM's area of responsibility includes air, land and sea approaches and encompasses the continental United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico and the surrounding water out to approximately 500 nautical miles.

NORAD is a bi-national command formed by a partnership between Canada and the United States. NORAD provides aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning for North America. USNORTHCOM conducts homeland defense, civil support and security cooperation to defend and secure the U.S. and its interests. The two commands have complementary missions and are co-located together on Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

Port of Everett to Receive $5.95 Million DOT Loan for Marine Terminal Rail Improvements

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao announced Nov. 1 that the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Build America Bureau will provide up to a $5.95 million Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan to the Port of Everett, Washington. The loan is for the Marine Terminal Rail Improvements Phase II Project.

"This funding will help fund a key port in Washington state to handle more cargo, thereby helping our country remain competitive in the increasingly global economy," Chao said.

The port is a natural deep-water port on Port Gardner Bay. As the third largest container port in the state of Washington, Everett is a major center of commerce. The port specializes in the handling of oversized and overweight cargoes and provides services to diverse businesses in a variety of industries, including aerospace manufacturer Boeing.

The project will expand on-terminal rail capacity to increase the amount of cargo that can be processed through the port. It will also alleviate local road congestion. The project provides approximately 3,300 lineal feet of on-terminal working track, more than doubling the operational capacity of rail at the seaport. It will also relocate a 39,000-square foot warehouse for use to provide cover for rail cargo.

"Completing critical infrastructure upgrades like this will

better position the port and its facilities to handle the larger vessels and heavier cargoes and other opportunities on the horizon," said Glen Bachman, Port of Everett Commission president.

The bureau, which administers the RRIF credit program, was established as a "one-stop shop" to streamline credit opportunities, while also providing technical assistance and encouraging innovative best practices in project planning, financing, delivery, and monitoring. To date, the RRIF credit program has closed approximately $5.4 billion in financings.