

Ribcraft Wins \$43 Million Navy Contract for Rigid Inflatables

MARBLEHEAD, Mass. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Ribcraft, a manufacturer of rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) for law enforcement, safety professionals and military agencies, a five-year indefinite-quantity contract worth up to \$43 million, the company said in a release.

Under the contract, Ribcraft will build and deliver an estimated 48 of its 11-meter Expeditionary Mine Counter Measure Boats. Ribcraft has also been providing the Navy with 7-Meter shipboard RIBs since 2014.

“The awarding of this latest contract is testament to Ribcraft’s exceptional design and production capabilities. We’ve enjoyed a long and collaborative relationship with the Navy,” said P. Brian Gray, Ribcraft’s president and CEO. “We have a proven track record of meeting the needs of the Navy with exceptional product and service.”

A critical component of the Expeditionary Mine Countermeasures Company, the 11-meter RIBs will serve to support explosive ordnance disposal mine countermeasure platoons in both shallow and deep-water operations.

To achieve this, Ribcraft will build two configurations for mine countermeasure operations, one with an open aft deck for stowage and deployment of two combat rubber raiding craft, and the other featuring a launch, recover and handling system for deployment and retrieval of unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV), which will have the capability to launch, recover and handle two UUVs using a single davit.

Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma Returns Home after \$12.5 Million Drug Bust



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma works with an armed helicopter interdiction tactical squadron during a counter-drug patrol on Feb. 1 in the eastern Pacific Ocean. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan L. Noel

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma returned to Kittery, Maine, on March 12 after a 70-day counter-drug patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

Tahoma's crew seized about 700 pounds of cocaine, valued at \$12.5 million while working with an armed Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 aircraft on board.

The crew of Tahoma worked with several other Coast Guard units in the area to detain 27 suspected narcotics traffickers, and interdict 9,600 pounds of cocaine and 640 pounds of marijuana.

Tahoma's crew transited through the Panama Canal to conduct counter-drug operations under the tactical control of the Joint Interagency Task Force South in support of Operation Martillo. The operation involves 20 participating nations working together to counter transnational organized crime networks and illicit trafficking in the waters along Central America.

“The crew was outstanding in executing the counter-drug

mission in support of Operation Martillo,” said Cmdr. Michael Sarnowski, commanding officer of Tahoma. “I sincerely appreciate the contributions and professionalism from our detached teams while on this deployment.”

Tahoma is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a crew complement of 100. They conduct maritime enforcement and homeland security missions in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Coronavirus Outbreak Could Have Lasting Impact on Sea Services' Supply Chain, Official Says

WASHINGTON – In addition to imposing immediate travel restrictions on personnel and forcing U.S. Navy ships at sea to self-quarantine between visits to foreign ports, the worldwide coronavirus outbreak could be an “impacting element” on acquisition and sustainment programs, a Department of the Navy official said.

“We’ve been working for a long time on supply chain integrity, and so [the virus outbreak] plays into the supply chain, understanding our supply lines where we’ve got fragility, [and] planning forward on that,” James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition,

told the readiness subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on March 12.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), the readiness subcommittee chairman, used his first question at the hearing on Navy and U.S. Marine Corps readiness not about destroyers or shipyards but on how the sea services are dealing with the coronavirus outbreak, which the World Health Organization on March 11 designated as a pandemic.

Marine Corps Deputy Commandant Gen. Gary Thomas said the Corps is reviewing disease containment plans, starting to restrict large gatherings, implementing measures to screen and quarantine Marines when necessary, and screening personnel in unique places “in the sense that they bring people from all over the country, for example entry level training.”

Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Robert Burke said the Navy’s top priority is the “well-being of our Sailors and their family members.” He added that the Navy, along with the other armed services, is providing support to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), being coordinated by U.S. Northern Command.

The Navy is following CDC guidance regarding minimum requirements with implementation “above and beyond those requirements as necessary to meet the unique needs of the

service,” Burke said.

Ships at sea are on self-quarantine for 14 days between every port departure and arrival and are monitoring their crew for symptoms of the virus. The at-sea quarantines, first initiated in the Pacific, are now in force worldwide, Burke said. “We are very sensitive to the fact that we’re moving from place to place rapidly. We do not want to be the source of transmission of the virus,” he added.

CNO Calls Unmanned MQ-4C Triton ‘Game-Changing’



An MQ-4C Triton taxis after landing at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in January. U.S. Air Force/Senior Airman Ryan Brooks

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy’s top officer said the high-altitude, high-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is providing support to the fleet on its first deployment that was not available before.

“We’re still committed to the [MQ-4C Triton],” Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday said, responding to a question from Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) during a March 11 hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee’s Defense subcommittee.

“We just accelerated the deployment of our first two out to Guam, so they are on station and on mission right now,” Gilday said. “The capabilities that the MQ-4 brings are game-changing in terms of long-range ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] at altitude, with sensors that we haven’t had supporting the fleet before.”

"We just accelerated the deployment of our first two [MQ-4C Tritons] out to Guam, so they are on station and on mission right now."

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday

Gilday took the opportunity to mention the Navy's future unmanned, carrier-based aerial refueling aircraft, the MQ-25A Stingray, which is now in testing. He pointed out the aircraft's potential ISR sensing capability as well as its primary aerial refueling role.

Also testifying was Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David H. Berger, who said ISR unmanned assets "would become even more important. It does complement the manned ISR platforms like an F-35, which is a flying sensor platform. Especially critical for the forward force, the Navy-Marine Corps expeditionary team that's up forward, as a stand-in forward force. That's your eyes and ears. The joint force has to have a picture of what's in front of them. I would expect, four or five years from now, much more unmanned ISR and [in] 10 years exponentially more than that."

Berger added that a family of all sizes of UAVs is needed.

"We have the means for a sergeant to launch, recover, control a hand-held unmanned platform. He also has to be linked to medium, high-altitude, longer endurance as well, either kinetically to engage something for a target or just to collect information."

"Unmanned is going to be a huge part of our future," acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said. "Unmanned is a critical element – not just aerial but unmanned ships as well."

SAIC Wins Award to Support Navy, Marine Corps Tactical Warfare Training

MCLEAN, Va. – SAIC has been awarded a \$45.2 million follow-on contract to support the tactical warfare training of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, the company said in a release. The single-award contract has a three-year period of performance.

SAIC will continue providing technical and tactical expertise to support tactical warfare training of the Tactical Training Group Pacific (TTGP) stationed in San Diego, the Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Pacific (EWTGP) based in Coronado, California, Tactical Training Group Detachment (TTGPDY) Yokosuka, Japan, and Carrier Strike Group 15 in San Diego.

SAIC's support provides the Navy and Marine Corps the most up-to-date training, including instruction related to tactics, techniques and procedures as well as practical applications and wargaming support, utilizing government-furnished training systems for classroom training, Fleet Synthetic Training, and Live, Virtual, Constructive Training. This support enables TTGP and EWTGP to execute their primary mission to train carrier strike groups, expeditionary strike groups, and amphibious ready groups of the Navy's Third and Seventh Fleets.

"SAIC is proud to continue our support of TTGP and EWTGP as they train groups for deployment," said Jim Scanlon, SAIC executive vice president and general manager of the Defense Systems Customer Group. "We want today's Navy and Marine Corps forces to be as mission-ready as possible and this program enables that preparation."

SAIC was the only awardee for this contract. Three

subcontractors – American Systems, Prairie Quest, and Stellar Peak – will work with SAIC on this contract.

“Our years of successful engagement on this program, coupled with key personnel, secured this win and cemented the trust between us and our customers in this contract,” Scanlon said.

Navy Assumes ‘Balanced’ Risk of Strike Fighter Inventory with Super Hornet Curtailment



An F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brianna Thompson

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy is working to manage its strike fighter inventory by focusing on restoring grounded fighters while curtailing future procurement of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet after 2021, Navy officials said.

The Navy is requesting 24 Super Hornets in the fiscal 2021 budget but has cancelled plans to procure 36 more beyond 2021.

In a March 10 hearing of the Tactical Air and Land Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Hartzler (R-Mo.) said the Navy has a shortfall of 49 strike fighters – more than the 44 strike fighter complement of a carrier air wing – and that the Navy’s decision to curtail Super Hornet procurement “is creating too much operational risk in the near term.”

Rear Adm. Gregory N. Harris, director of air warfare in the

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, said that ensuring enough fighters are coming out of depot-level maintenance while others are inducted into service-life modification (SLM) program is “a balanced risk that we are taking right now based on the current budget.”

Commenting on the large amount of corrosion found on the first two Super Hornets inducted into the SLM program, James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, said the Navy has added to the program “so that we deliver a fully mission-capable airplane out of SLM,” including phase maintenance checks, “so when we hand it back to the wing and the squadron, it’s ready to go. Previous service-life extension programs have just done things to the airplane but not taken advantage of the fact we had the airplane all pulled apart.”

Geurts said that the Navy is working closely with Boeing “to productionize the service-life extension – not getting every airplane its own custom artisan activity. We need to get that in the production flow. So, some of the risk of shoving the F/A-18 down after [fiscal] ’21 will be taking advantage of that line to productionize to get to our goal of 40 airplanes a year through that SLEP line.”

Geurts also said the improved mission-capable rate of the current Super Hornet fleet “gives us additional ‘up’ aircraft to help balance that shortfall.”

He said it takes 18 months to get a Super Hornet through SLM, but his goal is to reduce that to 12 months.

He predicted that by 2029 the Navy would reach its full fighter inventory.

The U.S. Marine Corps, having inherited many of the Navy’s divested F/A-18C Hornets, has 275 Hornets on hand to meet an inventory requirement of 143, said Lt. Gen. Steven R. Rudder, deputy commandant for aviation.

“We have enough Hornets, we have enough [AV-8B] Harriers,” Rudder said. “The challenge for us is the transition [to the F-35] ... to maintain a 20 F-35 buy a year – at least – so we can stand up at least two squadrons a year as we go forward.”

Keel-Laying of Coast Guard's First OPC Set for April



An artist rendering of the offshore patrol cutter. Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc.

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard plans to celebrate the keel-laying of the first Heritage-class offshore patrol cutter (OPC) next month in Panama City, Florida.

Testifying March 10 before the House Homeland Security Committee, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz said the keel of the Argus, the first OPC hull, would be laid in April at the Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc. shipyard.

The OPC is designed to replace the current fleet of medium-endurance cutters, which are between 30 and 50 years old. OPCs will provide a capability bridge between the national security cutter and the fast-response cutter. Each OPC will feature a flight deck and advanced C4ISR (command, control, computers, communications, intelligence and reconnaissance) capabilities.

Delivery of the first OPC is expected in fiscal 2022. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 25 OPCs. The damage inflicted on the Eastern Shipbuilding facilities by Hurricane Michael in October 2018 resulted in the sea service granting relief to the shipbuilder, reducing its planned construction to four

OPCs instead on nine and deciding to recompute the remainder of the OPC program.

Textron Delivers First Next-Generation Ship-to-Shore Connector to the Navy



The next-generation air-cushion vehicle, Ship-to-Shore Connector. Textron Systems Corp.

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Textron Systems Corp. successfully delivered its first next-generation air-cushion vehicle, Ship-to-Shore Connector (SSC) Craft 100, to the U.S. Navy in February, the company announced.

“We are proud to deliver the first of many Ship-to-Shore Connectors to the U.S. Navy,” said Henry Finneral, senior vice president of Textron Systems. “This delivery is the result of the dedication by the joint Navy and industry team and will provide the Navy with a needed capability to rapidly transport material, personnel and humanitarian assistance to shorelines.”

Prior to delivery, Craft 100 underwent integrated testing to demonstrate the capability of its fly-by-wire steering, electrical and propulsion systems and completed its acceptance trials in December 2019.

As the replacement for the existing fleet of Landing Craft, Air-Cushion (LCAC) vehicles, follow-on SSCs will primarily transport weapon systems, equipment, cargo and personnel through tough environmental conditions to the beach.

The craft can travel at a sustained 35 knots and shares less than 1% of legacy LCAC original parts, representing a true upgrade for the LCAC forces at Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 4, ACU 5, and Naval Beachmaster Unit 7. The SSC also has an increased payload and service life of 30 years.

The SSC is constructed at Textron Systems in New Orleans and built with similar configurations, dimensions and clearances to existing LCAC, ensuring the compatibility of this next-generation air cushion vehicle with existing well deck-equipped amphibious ships as well as expeditionary transfer docks and expeditionary sea bases.

The Navy will continue to utilize Craft 100 as a test and training craft. There are 13 additional SSCs in various states of production. Builder's trials for Craft 101 are scheduled for the first quarter of this year with acceptance trials following in the spring.

GE Engines to Power Four New Chamsuri II-Class Patrol Boats for Korean Navy

EVENDALE, Ohio – GE Marine's 4.6 MW LM500 marine gas turbines will power ships 13 through 16 of the Republic of Korea Navy's PKX-B patrol boat program, the company said in a release.

The 220-ton PKX-B Chamsuri II class ships will be built by the Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction shipyard, and the GE LM500 gas turbine modules will be manufactured, assembled and tested in-country by Hanwha Aerospace.

In December 2019, the ROK Navy launched PKX-B ships five through eight with expectations to be delivered to the fleet by the end of 2020. Each ship can attain speeds over 40 knots powered by two GE LM500 gas turbines and two diesel engines in a combined diesel and gas turbine (CODAG) configuration.

The PKX-B complements the larger, 500-ton PKX-A Gumdoksuri class patrol boats to provide maritime protection and defense in and along the ROK's seaways. Both the PKX-A and PKX-B ships are powered by GE LM500 marine gas turbines; the first PKX-A Gumdoksuri in the 18-ship program entered service in 2008.

"Thanks to our long-standing relationships in the Republic of Korea, we worked directly with key component manufacturers on a complete system design analysis and improvement program," said GE's Kris Shepherd, vice president and general manager of marine operations. "The end result was the PKX-B realized a 45% reduction in size and weight from its PKX-A predecessor by optimizing the package and gas turbine auxiliary systems to include an electric start system."

Navy Secretary to Commission Future Carrier 2030 Task Force



A C-2A Greyhound prepares to move across the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Angel Thuy Jaskuloski

WASHINGTON – Acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly announced that he is commissioning a Blue-Ribbon

Future Carrier 2030 (FC-2030) Task Force to conduct a six-month study that will reimagine the future of the aircraft carrier and carrier-based naval aviation (manned and unmanned) for 2030 and beyond.

FC-2030 will be complementary to, and informed by, a broad review of national shipbuilding requirements being conducted by Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist. U.S. Navy and Marine Corps uniformed and civilian leadership will be engaged in both efforts.

FC-2030 will attract current and former leaders from Congress, leaders from the U.S. shipbuilding and supporting technology industries and current and former Pentagon leaders as well as thought leaders at war colleges, think-tanks and futurists from around the nation.

“The long-term challenges facing our nation and the world demand clear-eyed assessments and hard choices,” Modly said. “Because we have four new Ford carriers under contract, we have some time to reimagine what comes next. Any assessment we do must consider cost, survivability and the critical national requirement to sustain an industrial base that can produce the ships we need –ships that will contribute to a superior, integrated naval force for the 2030s and far beyond.

“Aircraft carrier construction sustains nearly 60,000 skilled jobs in over 46 states,” Modly added. “It can’t be simply turned on and off like a faucet. We must be thoughtful in how we approach changes as they will have lasting impacts on our national industrial competitiveness and employment.”

The task force will be led by an executive director chosen from within the Department of the Navy’s Secretariat staff and assisted on a collateral-duty basis by representatives from the Office of Naval Research and the deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Development.

With an executive director, the FC-2030 senior executive panel

will consist of thought leaders with historical records of leading and contributing to large change in maritime defense strategies and programs. Former Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) has agreed to serve as the honorary chairman of the executive panel. Former Nav Secretary John Lehman, former acting Deputy Defense Secretary Christine Fox, former Deputy Navy Undersecretary Seth Cropsey and former Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) have agreed to serve as executive members of the panel.

“Our future strength will be determined as much by the gray matter we apply to our challenges as the gray hulls we build,” Modly said. “We need the best minds from both inside and outside of government focused on this issue.”

The study will be conducted with the assistance of the Naval University System (U.S. Naval Academy, Naval War College, Marine Corps University and Naval Postgraduate School) as well as eligible federally funded research and development centers and naval warfare centers.