

Second Virginia-Class Sub in Fiscal 2021 Tops Navy's Unfunded Priority List



The crew of the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington return to Naval Station Norfolk on Feb. 11 after the boat's maiden deployment. Another sub of the class leads the Navy's fiscal 2021 unfunded priorities list, according to a letter to Congress from Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alfred A. Coffield

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Virginia-class attack submarine heads the U.S. Navy's fiscal 2021 unfunded priorities list, according to Feb. 19 letter to Congress from Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday. Three types of aircraft and one logistics proof-of-concept ship round out the top five unfunded priorities.

Every year the services provide to congressional defense committees a list of procurement, operations and base infrastructure requirements that they would like Congress to fund should it wish to allocate more funds or to fund different priorities than some of those in the budget submission.

A Virginia SSN order at \$2.8 billion would be in addition to the one funded in the budget and enable the Navy to build a total of 10 Virginia SSNs under the Block V multiyear contract.

The Navy also would like to add five F-35C Lightning II strike fighters to the 11 requested in the 2021 budget. Including spare parts, the addition would cost \$525.5 million.

The service also would like to procure an additional two E-2D

Advanced Hawkeye command-and-control aircraft, upping the buy from six to eight for \$357 million. The Navy has program of record of 77 – up from 75 – and has an objective of procuring a total of 86 E-2Ds.

The Navy also would like to add two CMV-22B Osprey carrier-onboard-delivery aircraft to the six in the budget, which would require \$211.4 million, including spare parts and spare engines. This also would increase the number of CMV-22Bs in the program to 46.

As the Navy defines its requirements for a Small Auxiliary Logistics Platform for distributed maritime operations, it would like to fund – for \$12 million – the lease of an additional offshore support vessel to support demonstrations “to evaluate potential solutions for refuel, re-supply and re-arm logistics mission requirements,” the letter said.

The Navy also would like to double the number of Next-Generation Jammer shipsets to six; procure 20 additional Naval Strike Missiles (NSMs), along with installation of an NSM launcher on an amphibious transport dock ship; procure two Surface Mission Modules for littoral combat ships; and purchase 100 more AIM-9X Block II air-to-air missiles; procure 6,392 sonobuoys to make up for unplanned operational expenditures; and upgrades to the Dual Band Radar on USS Gerald R. Ford and the Multifunction Radar on the Zumwalt-class destroyers.

12th Expeditionary Fast

Transport Launched



A graphic illustration of the future expeditionary fast transport USNS Newport. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Raymond Diaz

MOBILE, Ala. – The U.S. Navy's 12th expeditionary fast transport (EPF), the future USNS Newport (EPF 12), was launched at Austal USA's shipyard on Feb. 20, according to the Navy's Program Executive Office-Ships said.

The launching of an EPF is a multistep process. The ship modules are constructed in Austal's manufacturing facility, then transported to the assembly bay. When ready for launch, the ship is translated by heavy-lift machinery to a docking barge in the Mobile River and further translated onto a floating dry dock. From there, the dry dock is submerged and the ship is launched. The translation and launch takes place over the course of two days.

"We are excited to get Newport in the water, so we can shift focus to final outfitting and trials," said Tim Roberts, strategic and theater sealift program manager, PE0-Ships. "EPFs increase our reach, improving our ability to sustain our Navy and Marine Corps forces around the globe."

EPFs are versatile, noncombatant transport ships that are being used for high-speed transportation of troops, military vehicles and equipment. They support a variety of missions including overseas contingency operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, support of special operations forces, theater security cooperation activities and emerging joint sea-basing concepts.

EPFs can transport 600 short tons 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. Each vessel includes a flight deck to support day and night aircraft launch and recovery

operations. The ships are capable of interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, as well as on/off-loading vehicles such as a fully combat-loaded Abrams tank.

The Newport is on track to be delivered later this year. Austal USA has also started construction of the future USNS Apalachicola (EPF 13) and is under contract to build the future USNS Cody (EPF 14).

As Part of Investment Plans, Coast Guard Creating Major Base in South Carolina



A Coast Guard Air Station Savannah MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew conducts a search-and-rescue demonstration on Feb. 19 in Charleston, South Carolina. The demonstration was performed for members of the media attending the State of the Coast Guard address in Charleston. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Dickinson

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard is expanding its Charleston, South Carolina, station

into a major Atlantic base and home to its newest class of cutters.

In addition

to five 418-foot national security cutters, the Coast Guard's largest and

newest sea-going patrol vessels, Charleston will be the homeport for a

complement of yet to be built offshore patrol cutters.

“Charleston

is a first stop to nationwide investment in our service, our facilities and our

people,” Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said in his State of the Coast Guard

address, which was live streamed from Charleston on Feb. 20.

Over the

next five years the Coast Guard plans to consolidate its campus along one

waterfront, starting with \$140 million to begin upgrading shoreside facilities.

The improvements could turn Charleston into one of the nation’s largest

concentrations of Coast Guard assets and people. The port of Charleston is experiencing

unprecedented change, Schultz said, noting that by 2021, Charleston will have

the deepest harbor on the East Coast.

However, 40%

of Coast Guard buildings around the country are over 50 years old, leading to a

\$2 billion backlog of facility repairs for mold, leaky roofs, flooding and

outdated building standards. The Coast Guard’s fiscal year 2021 budget request

is \$12.3 billion, \$77 million more than the \$12.2 billion approved last

year.

“As commandant, I need my operational commanders to be able to communicate with every Coast Guard asset – anytime, anywhere.”

Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz

There are

also problems with the agency's 1990s-era computer hardware and software.

"Years of investment tradeoffs have brought our information technology to the brink of catastrophic failure," Schultz said. Over the summer, more than 95 vital systems went off-line for several days due to a single server malfunction.

To address information technology issues, Schultz released the Coast Guard's Tech Revolution Road Map for digital modernization. Upgrades are planned over the next three years, starting with increasing Coast Guard external internet speeds and doubling connectivity for major cutters in 2020.

Communication is also a problem in the Arctic, Schultz noted. The medium icebreaker Healy is without reliable communications for a large part of its multimonth patrol above the Arctic Circle. Last month the harsh environment in Alaska knocked out communications equipment.

"As commandant, I need my operational commanders to be able to communicate with every Coast Guard asset – anytime, anywhere," Schultz said. "We are exploring new satellite communications capabilities with the Department of Defense and industry, as well as renewing land-based communications capabilities in Alaska." Arctic communications, however, are a "whole-of-government" issue, he said, adding "we must work together to solve our communication blackout in the Arctic now."

The first of the 360-foot offshore patrol cutters, the Argus, is under construction with delivery planned in 2022. The OPC

program calls for 25 hulls, ultimately making up almost 70% of the Coast Guard's offshore presence.

They will replace the service's 210-foot medium-endurance cutters and become "the backbone of our modernized fleet," Schultz said. They will also play a critical role in the Coast Guard's campaign against narcotics trafficking in the Western Hemisphere.

In a move to expand maritime domain awareness across the Pacific Ocean, the service is partnering with Global Fishing Watch, an international, no-profit big data technology platform that leverages satellite data to track global commercial fishing activity.

Digital Modernization Among the Money Savers That Could Help Navy Reach 355 Ships, Modly Says



Acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly during the CSIS panel discussion on Feb. 21.

WASHINGTON – Digital modernization of U.S. Navy back-office operations is a largely overlooked activity that can improve readiness, cut

costs and deliver educational content and training to personnel, acting Navy Secretary

Thomas B. Modly said on Feb. 21.

Participating in a panel discussion with U.S. Army Secretary

Ryan McCarthy and U.S. Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Modly and the others were asked what technologies were underappreciated or promised unexpected benefits.

The Army secretary cited long-range precision fires. The Air Force secretary mentioned GPS and the other existing technologies in space that she noted were “ubiquitous but invisible.” Modly singled out digitalization for opening up “huge opportunities to improve our networks and how we do business through better use of technology.”

The Department of the Navy is at least 15 years behind the private sector in the ability “to understand where things are in our inventory system,” Modly said. As an example, he cited an audit conducted in 2019 that found a warehouse in Florida containing aircraft parts worth \$150 million.

“We didn’t know we had the parts. We didn’t know we had the warehouse,” he said. A week after the parts were input into the Navy’s inventory system, there were \$20 million in requisitions for those parts “for aircraft that were down for [lack of] parts we didn’t know we had,” Modly said.

During discussion of other topics, Modly said he didn’t think the Navy Department budget top line – or the Defense Department’s – was likely to grow much soon. To contend with the pressures of increasing the size of the surface force to 355 ships and improving readiness,

Modly said leaders will need to look internally to find savings “in the way we traditionally do things” to fund the priorities outlined in the National Defense Strategy.

He said some “North Stars” point the way in the recently completed Integrated Naval Force Structure Assessment, which has not been made public. Additionally, Modly has ordered a stem-to-stern review to find savings to fill the budget gap. If 5% to 6% of the \$207 billion Navy budget can be freed up, he said, “we can start moving down the path” to a 355-ship-plus Navy in the next 10 years. All three secretaries said they were cooperating with each other and industry on the development of hypersonic weapons.

However, Modly noted that moving such new technology to production is a “big, big leap.” He added that the military needs to send strong signals to industry about where it is headed. “But a lot of this technology is really new, so we have to make sure it works before we jump too far.”

NAVAIR Orders Six VH-92 Presidential Helicopters From Sikorsky



Marine Helicopter Squadron One runs test flights of the new VH-92A over the south lawn of the White House in September 2018. U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Hunter Helis

ARLINGTON, Va. – Naval Air Systems Command has awarded Sikorsky a second production contract to build VH-92A

helicopters for the U.S. Marine Corps, the company said in a release.

The VH-92A has been selected to provide transport for the president of the United States, the vice president and other high-level government officials. The helicopter will replace the 19 VH-3D Sea King and VH-60N "White Hawk" helicopters operated by Marine Helicopter Squadron One. The Corps plans to acquire a total of 23 VH-92As.

Under the \$470.8 million low-rate initial production (LRIP) Lot II contract, Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, will deliver six VH-92A helicopters in 2022 and 2023.

"All six of the production aircraft from the first [LRIP] contract are undergoing modifications at Sikorsky's Stratford, Connecticut, plant and are on schedule to begin deliveries in 2021," Sikorsky said in the release.

Five VH-92As have been assigned to government testing at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, the release said. A sixth is going through modification and will enter the test program this spring. The modification includes a mature mission and communications system. Initial operational test and evaluation is scheduled for later this year.

Sikorsky said the aircraft in testing have accrued more than 1,000 test hours.

The company and the U.S. Navy integrate mature mission and communications systems into the aircraft.

"The program continues to progress on budget and within our planned acquisition timeline," Marine Col. Eric Ropella, the Navy's presidential helicopter program manager, said in the release.

"Now that we are ramping up production, the VH-92A program is gaining momentum," Dave Banquer, Sikorsky VH-92A program

director, said in the release.

“This second contract award demonstrates the confidence the U.S. Marine Corps has in Sikorsky’s proven ability to deliver and support the next-generation presidential helicopter. The men and women of Sikorsky treasure our legacy of building and providing helicopter transportation for every president and commander in chief since Dwight D. Eisenhower. We are proud to continue that legacy with the VH-92A helicopter.”

KBR Secures \$276 Million NAVAIR Task Order to Deploy IT Solutions

HOUSTON – KBR has been awarded a \$276 million task order to provide state-of-the-art information technology services and equipment to Naval Air Systems Command’s (NAVAIR) Logistics and Maintenance Information Systems and Technology Division, the company said in a release.

Under this contract, KBR will assist NAVAIR in supporting global information grid and net-centric operations and delivering logistics IT capability to the Navy and other Department of Defense organizations.

KBR’s tasks will include authentication, data transport, fleet user interfaces, large-scale storage, analytics tools and hardware and software infrastructure. As part of this work, KBR will acquire and deliver essential in-service systems engineering, modernization, testing and sustainment capabilities.

“KBR’s talented workforce is proud to partner with NAVAIR in implementing and deploying cutting-edge IT solutions across the globe,” said Byron Bright, KBR’s president of government solutions U.S.

This work, which has an increased scope, is a continuation of services that KBR is currently performing for NAVAIR. The company will perform this work at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland and other DoD locations. The work is expected to be performed over a period of five years.

USS Dewey Receives First ODIN Laser Weapon to Counter Enemy UAS



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey steams alongside the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson. The Dewey recently was the first guided-missile destroyer to receive the ODIN anti-UAS laser weapon system. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Z.A. Landers WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy recently installed the first Optical Dazzling Interdictor, Navy (ODIN), a laser weapon system that allows its ships to counter enemy unmanned aerial systems (UAS), Naval Sea Systems Command said.

The first system was installed on the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey during the ship’s recently completed dry-docking.

ODIN’s development, testing and production was done by Navy experts at Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Dahlgren

Division in Dahlgren, Virginia, in support of Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems. Their work on the laser weapon system known as LaWS positioned them to be the design and production agent for ODIN.

During his recent visit to the Dewey, James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research development and acquisition, said he was impressed by the rapid progress made by the team.

Geurts said: "This is a great example of our organic talent at the warfare centers all working together with ship's company to deliver a system which will provide game-changing capability. Bravo Zulu to the entire ODIN team on being mission-focused and delivering lethal capability to the warfighter."

Going from an approved idea to installation in two and a half years, ODIN's installation on Dewey is the first operational employment of the stand-alone system that functions as a dazzler to combat threats from enemy UAS.

Adversaries' UAS production and employment has increased significantly, and ODIN was developed to counter these threats.

"The Pacific Fleet commander identified this urgent counter-intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance need, and the chief of naval operations directed us to fill it as quickly as possible," said Cmdr. David Wolfe, Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems Directed Energy office.

"The NSWC Dahlgren Division team did an amazing job addressing challenges and keeping our accelerated schedule on track and moving forward to deliver this capability."

Within the next couple of years, the ODIN program will have all units operational within the fleet. Lessons learned from

ODIN's installation on Dewey will inform installation on other vessels and further development and implementation of surface Navy laser weapon systems.

Coast Guard Commandant: Illegal Chinese Fishing a 'National Security Challenge' That Warrants U.S. Response



U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz delivers his State of the Coast Guard address on Feb. 20. Defense Media Activity

ARLINGTON, Va. – The “Great Power Competition” with Russia and China isn’t limited to winning allies in geostrategic flash points or sailing through contested areas to promote freedom of the seas, according to the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Near-peer adversaries “are actively exploiting other nations’ natural resources, including fish stocks. In many cases [they are] challenging the sovereignty of smaller or less-developed nations,” Adm. Karl Schultz said in his annual State of the Coast Guard address, live-streamed Feb. 20 from Charleston, South Carolina.

Schultz identified China, which has the world's largest distant water fishing fleet, as "one of the worst predatory fishing offenders," engaging in Illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing (IUU). The problem goes beyond conservation and sustainability, he said – "This is a national security challenge warranting a clear response."

An essential protein source for more than 40% the world's population, fish stocks are critical to the sovereignty and economic security of many nations. The most conservative estimates put the annual loss to the global economy from IUU fishing at more than \$23 billion.

The Coast Guard could be a global leader in combatting IUU fishing through international cooperation and targeted operations, Schultz said, adding that the agency was developing a progressive IUU Strategic Outlook, planned for release in late summer.

Continuing to strengthen our military support platform with [@weareboeingsc](#) at the State of the Coast Guard Address by admiral Karl Schultz today! pic.twitter.com/zlMiha3vLQ

– Charleston RiverDogs (@ChasRiverDogs) [February 20, 2020](#)

The United States already holds 16 counter-IUU fishing bilateral agreements in the Pacific and West Africa. "And we are pursuing additional agreements to help us push back against the destructive fishing practices that are leaving vast expanses of the ocean and seabed in ruins," he said.

Nowhere is this more important than the Indo-Pacific, the epicenter of global maritime trade and geostrategic influence, Schultz said.

Many Pacific Island countries – even U.S. island territories – lack the capability to fully police their sovereign waters. Without mentioning any country by name, Schultz said he was most concerned by a “coercive state’s influence operations, intentions to construct dual-use infrastructure projects and implied military threats to persuade other states to heed their strategic agenda.”

To strengthen the community of island nations in Oceania, the Coast Guard will continue Operation AIGA, which last year deployed an oceangoing tender and a fast-response cutter (FRC) to Samoa and American Samoa, where they conducted exercises with ships from the Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand navies. By year’s end, delivery is expected of the first two, 154-foot FRCs to be homeported in Guam.

**MARAD’s Buzby: National
Maritime Strategy ‘a Matter**

of National Will'

WASHINGTON – A National Maritime Strategy is soon to be released, the U.S. Maritime Administrator said.

Maritime Administrator Mark H. Buzby, speaking Feb. 20 at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, a Washington think tank, said that a “National Maritime Strategy was directed by Congress in the 2014 Coast Guard Authorization Act” and that a draft “was waiting for me in my in-box when I showed up in August 2017. We’ve been working on that.”

“The final version of that strategy – or the recommendations of the strategy – are about to be released” ... “very shortly, within days or a week or two,” Buzby said.

“Constructing a National Maritime Strategy is going to be a matter of mustering national will,” he said. “It will move the ball quite a ways down the road and be a good path forward.”

He was speaking at the roll-out of CSBA’s new report, “Strengthening the U.S. Defense Maritime Industrial Base: A Plan to Improve Maritime Industry’s Contribution to National Security.”

Buzby said he had concerns about “the ability of our aging Ready Reserve Force [RRF] and relatively small remaining commercial U.S. Merchant Marine and mariner pool to meet this country’s needs in a protracted, all-hands-on-deck sealift effort.”

He said the results of the Sept. 19 turbo-activation of the RRF and Military Sealift Command’s (MSC’s) surge sealift ships showed a disappointing level of readiness on short notice.

He said that of the 61 ships – 46 RRF and 15 MSC – only 39 were ready to go on Sept. 16 when the activation was initiated, of which 33 were chosen for activation.

“Recapitalizing that force has been a focus of Congress, [which] has authorized the purchase of ships – we’re doing that right now with the Navy,” he said.

Buzby said the need for tankers has not been adequately addressed, citing for the need of a “bucket brigade of fuel necessary in a major conflict across the Pacific to keep everything running.”

He said more than 80 tankers would be needed to sustain U.S. forces in a major conflict.

“That need needs to be filled from someplace,” he said.

Buzby also pointed out that the in a protracted sealift operation voluntary civilian mariner force would be short about 1,800 mariners.

He also noted that of the seven shipyards that built sealift ships in the 1984 to 2002, only four are in operation and only one – NASSCO – is still in the business of building merchant and sealift ships.

Polar Star Completes Antarctic Treaty Inspections, Resupply Mission



The Cutter Polar Star moored on Feb. 5 next to a Maersk containership in McMurdo, Antarctica. U.S. Coast Guard/Senior Chief Petty Officer NyxoLyno Cangemi

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica – The 159 crew members onboard U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star departed McMurdo

Station on Feb. 19 after escorting three refuel and resupply vessels and assisting with a five-day inspection of foreign research stations, installations and equipment in Antarctica, according to the Coast Guard Pacific Area.

The departure marks the Polar Star's 23rd journey to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze, an annual joint military service mission to resupply U.S. stations in Antarctica, in support of the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the U.S. Antarctic Program.

The Seattle-based 399-foot, 13,000-ton Polar Star created a 23-mile channel through the ice to McMurdo Sound, which enabled the offload of over 19.5 million pounds of dry cargo and 7.6 million gallons of fuel from three logistics vessels. Together these three ships delivered enough fuel and critical supplies to sustain NSF operations throughout the year until Polar Star returns next year.



Royal Canadian Navy Leading Seaman Jeff Dubinsky prepares for a dive. Scuba divers from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army and the Royal Canadian Navy serve aboard the Polar Star to effect emergency repairs if needed to the aging heavy icebreaker. U.S. Coast Guard/Senior Chief Petty Officer NyxoLyno Cangemi
The Polar Star also supported a team of U.S. government officials from the State Department, National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Coast Guard who conducted a five-day inspection of foreign research stations, installations and equipment.

The U.S. continues to promote Antarctica's status as a continent reserved for peace and science in accordance with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The inspection serves to verify compliance with the Antarctic Treaty and its environmental protocol, including provisions prohibiting military measures and mining as well as provisions promoting safe station operation and sound environmental practices.

The team inspected three stations: Mario Zucchelli (Italy), Jang Bogo (South Korea) and Inexpressible Island (China). This was the 15th inspection of foreign research stations by the U.S. in Antarctica and the first since 2012. The U.S. will present its report on the inspections at the next Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Helsinki, Finland, in May.

“Maintaining and operating a 44-year-old ship in the harshest of environments takes months of planning and preparation, long workdays and missed holidays, birthdays and anniversaries with loved ones. The Polar Star crew truly embodies the ethos of the Antarctic explorers who came before us – courage, sacrifice and devotion.”

Greg Stanclik, commanding officer of the Polar Star

“I am immensely proud of all the hard work and dedication the men and women of the Polar Star demonstrate each and every day,” said Greg Stanclik, commanding officer of the heavy icebreaker.

“Maintaining and operating a 44-year-old ship in the harshest of environments takes months of planning and preparation, long workdays and missed holidays, birthdays and anniversaries with loved ones. The Polar Star crew truly embodies the ethos of the Antarctic explorers who came before us – courage, sacrifice and devotion.”

Commissioned in 1976, the Polar Star is the only operational U.S. heavy icebreaker, capable of breaking ice up to 21 feet thick. Reserved for Operation Deep Freeze each year, the ship spends the winter breaking ice near Antarctica, and when the mission is complete, returns to dry dock to conduct critical maintenance and repairs in preparation for the next Operation Deep Freeze mission.

If a catastrophic event, such as getting stuck in the ice, were to happen to the Coast Guard Cutter Healy in the Arctic

or to the Polar Star near Antarctica, the U.S. Coast Guard is left without a self-rescue capability. By contrast, Russia operates more than 50 icebreakers – several of which are nuclear-powered.

The U.S. Coast Guard has been the sole provider of the nation's polar icebreaking capability since 1965 and is seeking to increase its icebreaking fleet with six new polar security cutters to ensure continued national presence and access to the polar regions.

In April, the Coast Guard awarded VT Halter Marine Inc. of Pascagoula, Mississippi, a contract for the design and construction of the Coast Guard's lead polar security cutter, which will also be homeported in Seattle. The contract also includes options for the construction of two additional PSCs.

"Replacing the Coast Guard's icebreaker fleet is paramount," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area. "Our ability to clear a channel and allow for the resupply of the United States' Antarctic stations is essential for continued national presence and influence on the continent."