HII Finishes Acceptance Trials for Amphibious Assault Ship Tripoli

The amphibious assault ship Tripoli has completed its acceptance trials, Huntington Ingalls Industries announced Oct. 30. Huntington Ingalls Industries

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries announced the successful completion of acceptance trials aboard the amphibious assault ship Tripoli (LHA 7) in an Oct. 30 release. The second ship in the America class spent three days at sea in the Gulf of Mexico with the U.S. Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey, performing test procedures that included a full power run of the main propulsion system.

"The success of these trials is the culmination of the hard work and determination from our shipbuilders and leadership team. We have worked closely with our Navy partners to ensure that LHA 7 will provide unparalleled sea basing capabilities for the Navy's amphibious ready groups and the Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Forces," said Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias.

Huntington Ingalls is the sole builder of large-deck amphibious warships for the Navy. The shipyard delivered its first amphibious assault ship, the Iwo Jima-class USS Tripoli (LPH 10), in 1966. Ingalls has since built five Tarawa-class ships, eight Wasp-class ships and the first in a new class of ships, USS America (LHA 6). The third ship in the America class, Bougainville (LHA 8), is under construction at the shipyard and will be the 16th large-deck amphibious ship built at Ingalls.

"The LHA team at Ingalls is truly unmatched in their dedication to making these state-of-the-art warships for the

Navy," said George S. Jones, Ingalls' vice president of operations. "That dedication really showed during this trial. Our shipbuilders, test and trials team and our partners at Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Gulf Coast take great pride in the work they do every day and I know they are ready to finish the job strong."

Like the lead ship in the class, Tripoli is designed for survivability with increased aviation capacity, including an enlarged hangar deck, realignment and expansion of the aviation maintenance facilities, a significant increase in available stowage for parts and support equipment, and increased aviation fuel capacity. Like its predecessors, the ship will be able to operate as the flagship for an expeditionary strike group.

Tripoli will be the third ship to bear the name that commemorates the capture of Derna in 1805 by a small force of Marines and about 370 soldiers from 11 other nations. The battle, memorialized in the Marines' Hymn with the line "to the shores of Tripoli," brought about a successful conclusion to the combined operations of the First Barbary War.

Spencer Lauds Tight Integration of Navy, Marine Forces in 'Great Power Competition'

Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer extolled the determination of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps uniformed leaders to tightly integrate their

forces to prepare for the emerging great power competition and said that effort
would start with integrating the budget preparation process.

Spencer also endorsed Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger's call for a larger and more diversified amphibious fleet, including the
"lightning carrier" concept that would use amphibious assault ships with dozens
of F-35Bs to augment the aircraft carrier force.

"The Marines will be solely and intricately aligned with the Navy, and that starts with the POM process," Spencer said Oct. 30, referring to
the program objective memorandum, which are the armed services' proposals to
the Pentagon for the programs and funding they need.

> *America depends on her mighty Navy to defend her and to ensure open access to the world's oceans & trade with other nations. We were honored to host @secnav76 Spencer for a frank discussion on the future of US naval power with @Heritage and the media. pic.twitter.com/HQjoKAsuwc*
>
> *— Kay C. James (@KayColesJames) October 30, 2019*

"This is integrated funding," the secretary told a media roundtable hosted by the Heritage Foundation. "From the Navy view point, the
Marine Corps is to be considered a weapons platform for the U.S. Navy, in the
maritime domain and the multidomain."

"The Marines are going back into the riggings," Spencer said, referring to the Marines' historic role as riflemen in the "fighting
tops" of sailing ships to help the Navy in close-in fighting

against enemy warships. The Marines have been engaged in a land war for 18 years, but “we’re changing our major muscle movements to great power competition.”

The reason for naval integration, he said, was due to the National Defense Strategy and “the Pacific theater, where we’ll be primarily focused … it’s a maritime theater.”

Asked about Berger’s warning in his commandant’s planning guidance that the existing amphibious force was too small and the large amphibs too vulnerable to operate alone in the highly contested littoral waters around China, Spencer noted that Naval Sea Systems Command and the Marine Corps “weighed in on what the commandant said and what the options might be. … I applaud the fact that we are opening up the aperture to make sure we are looking at the full spectrum of what’s available.”

Asked about the legal issues of using unarmed and civilian-crewed support ships to augment traditional amphibs, Spencer noted the Navy already has changed some of those ships to the Navy designation, which would add uniformed sailors. “That’s an option that we have. We have to get the cost per hull more manageable.” Although the traditional amphibs are “great ships,” he asked, “can we get more impact for the dollar? We have to explore that.”

The secretary embraced Berger’s proposal to use large-deck

amphibious ships loaded with F-35B “Lightning II” strike fighters. He said: “Does it have the same strike capability as a carrier? No, it doesn’t. But if part of the mission of the carrier is presence and forward deployability … lightning carriers [are] a great option to augment what the requirement might be.”

The secretary acknowledged that the Navy may not be able to reach its goal of a 355-ship battle fleet with the current and expected funding. “We will have 305 ships with the top-line funding we have, but that’s not what we want.” Addressing Congress, he added, “If you give us the funding we need, we’ll go to 355.”

Marine Corps Orders 30 More Amphibious Combat Vehicles

BAE Systems has received a $120 million contract from the U.S. Marine Corps for additional Amphibious Combat Vehicles under a third order for Low-Rate Initial Production. BAE Systems
STAFFORD, Va. – BAE Systems has received a $120 million contract from the U.S. Marine Corps for additional Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACVs) under a third order for Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP), the company said in a release. This award is a next step on the path to Full-Rate Production.

An Oct. 29 Pentagon announcement said the order was for 30 ACVs.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QK7xUtzjA4
This latest contract is for the ACV personnel carrier variant (ACV-P), an eight-wheeled amphibious assault vehicle capable

of transporting Marines from open-ocean ship to shore and conducting land operations. Each vehicle embarks 13 Marines in addition to a crew of three.

“This award further validates the Marine Corps’ confidence in the vehicle’s proven capability in meeting their amphibious mission and represents an important step toward fielding the vehicle in the Fleet Marine Force. The ACV is a highly mobile, survivable and adaptable platform designed for growth to meet future mission role requirements while bringing enhanced combat power to the battlefield,” said John Swift, director of amphibious programs at BAE Systems.

Current low-rate production is focused on the ACV-P variant. More variants will be added under Full-Rate Production to include the command and control (ACV-C), 30 mm medium-caliber turret (ACV-30) and recovery variants (ACV-R) under the ACV Family of Vehicles program. BAE Systems previously received the Lot 1 and Lot 2 awards.

The Marine Corps selected BAE Systems along with teammate Iveco Defence Vehicles for the ACV program in 2018 to replace its legacy fleet of Assault Amphibious Vehicles, which have been in service for decades and were also built by BAE Systems.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE Systems locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and York, Pennsylvania.

USS Gerald R. Ford Completes Post-Shakedown Availability

The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford conducts high-speed turns in the Atlantic Ocean on Oct. 29 during sea trials. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Connor Loessin

WASHINGTON – The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford is back in its homeport at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, after successful completion on Oct. 30 of its post-shakedown availability/selected restricted availability, Program Executive Office (PEO) Aircraft Carriers announced.

Completion of the availability marks a significant milestone for the Ford, the first ship in a next-generation class that will serve for 50 years as a centerpiece of U.S national defense.

“This is a warship like none other, and the process of returning her to fleet service reflects the great technical skill, professionalism and tenacity of the government/industry team,” said Rear Adm. James Downey, program executive officer for aircraft carriers.

A PSA is a typical period of construction availability in the early life of a ship during which the Navy and shipbuilder resolve issues that arise in initial at-sea periods and make any needed changes and upgrades.

CVN 78’s PSA began on July 15, 2018, and included work on Advanced Weapons Elevators (AWEs), repairs to the ship’s main reduction gear, improvements to the throttle control system, upgrades to the advanced arresting gear and numerous other maintenance tasks.

During the PSA, most discrepancies – known as “trial cards” – that had been identified during previous workups

were addressed, with few remaining to address in future maintenance availabilities. As a first-of-class ship, such discrepancies are not unexpected, and the U.S. Navy is incorporating lessons learned from CVN 78 to inform design and actively improve oversight of future ships of the class.

The program manager for USS Gerald R. Ford, Capt. Ron Rutan, acknowledged that unique challenges accompany technological advances.

“The design and execution challenge in delivering a first-of-class warfighting platform is not only to make CVN 78 better, but also to enhance production on the next ships in the class – the future USS John F. Kennedy and future USS Enterprise,” Rutan said.

The Gerald R. Ford class incorporates 23 new technologies with advances in propulsion, power generation, ordnance handling and aircraft launch systems. These innovations will support a 30% higher sortie generation rate, executed with a 20% reduction in crew compared to Nimitz-class carriers. The Gerald R. Ford-class carrier offers a 17% reduction – about $4 billion per ship – in life-cycle operations and support costs compared to the Nimitz class.

JFK Crew Marks Another Milestone – Flooding of Newport News Dry Dock

The future John F. Kennedy reaches another construction milestone on Oct. 29 as its dry dock is flooded three months

ahead of schedule. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Adam Ferrero

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – The future John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) marked another milestone leading up to the christening of the second Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier as Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) flooded the ship's dry dock on Oct. 29.

The John F. Kennedy has been under construction at NNS in Newport News since 2015 and continues to prepare for its christening, which is scheduled for Dec. 7.

The JFK's launching occurred about three months early, according to the original schedule for the carrier. Other milestones had been reached leading up to the dry dock flooding, including laying of the ship's keel on Aug. 22, 2015, and placement of the 588-metric-ton island superstructure on May 29.

Capt. Todd Marzano, JFK's commanding officer, and its crew participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Oct. 1 to officially establish the crew and designate the building where the Sailors will work during the carrier's continued construction.

Ensign Cheyenne Scarbrough, a John F. Kennedy crew member from San Francisco, brings a plethora of skillsets and experience to include the honor of being a double plank owner.

> *"CVN 79 has come a long way since I first observed initial construction in the dry dock back in 2015 following the keel laying."*
>
> *Capt. Todd Marzano, JFK's commanding officer*

"Being assigned to the future John F. Kennedy allows me another chance to start from ground zero, streamline processes and bring the ship to life," said Scarbrough, who

has served 17 years in the U.S. Navy and received her commission in March. Scarbrough has served on USS Enterprise (CVN 65), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78).

While Scarbrough brings experience on both Nimitz and Ford-classes of aircraft carriers, Senior Chief Logistics Specialist David Adkins brings his experience serving on board the first USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67).

“I embarked on board USS John F. Kennedy while assigned to VFA-81 in 2004,” said Adkins, an 18-year veteran from Jacksonville, Florida. “For me being part of ship’s company now is definitely a point in my career where I have gone full circle.”

Marzano, who served on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) while it underwent maintenance at NNS as future John F. Kennedy’s keel was laid, emphasized his perspective in leading his crew throughout the ship’s construction.

“CVN 79 has come a long way since I first observed initial construction in the dry dock back in 2015 following the keel laying,” Marzano said. “At that point I had no idea I’d be fortunate enough to be the ship’s first commanding officer, and I’m incredibly honored, humbled and excited to be given the opportunity to lead such an amazing team of high-quality crew members.”

Pentagon, Lockheed Reach Deal

to Reduce Cost of F-35A by 12.8%

Two U.S. Navy variant F-35C Lightning II aircraft from Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, fly in formation over the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range after completing a training mission. U.S. Navy/Lt. Cmdr. Darin Russell

FORT WORTH, Texas – The F-35 Joint Program Office and Lockheed Martin finalized a $34 billion agreement for the production and delivery of 478 F-35s at the lowest price in the history of the program, according to a Lockheed release. The contract includes all U.S., international partners and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) aircraft in Lots 12, 13 and 14.

In the deal, the F-35 program exceeds its cost-reduction targets for each variant of the joint strike fighter – and the price per unit of the F-35A, the U.S. Air Force version, including aircraft and engine, is below $80 million in both Lots 13 and 14.

The F-35A unit cost represents an estimated overall 12.8% reduction from Lot 11 costs for the F-35A conventional landing variant and an average of 12.7% savings across all three variants from Lot 11 to 14. The other variants are the vertical take-off and landing F-35B, the U.S. Marine Corps version, and the F-35C, equipped for U.S. Navy aircraft carrier operations.

“Driving down cost is critical to the success of this program. I am excited that the F-35 Joint Program Office and Lockheed Martin have agreed on this landmark three-lot deal,” said Air Force Lt. Gen. Eric Fick, F-35 program executive officer. “This $34 billion agreement is a truly historic milestone for the F-35 Enterprise.”

The agreement includes 291 aircraft for the U.S. armed

services, 127 for F-35 international partners and 60 for FMS customers.

“With smart acquisition strategies, strong government-industry partnership and a relentless focus on quality and cost reduction, the F-35 Enterprise has successfully reduced procurement costs of the fifth-generation F-35 to equal or less than fourth-generation legacy aircraft,” said Greg Ulmer, Lockheed Martin’s F-35 program vice president and general manager.

More than 450 F-35s operate from 19 bases around the globe. More than 910 pilots and 8,350 maintainers have been trained, and the F-35 fleet has surpassed more than 220,000 cumulative flight hours. Eight nations have F-35s operating from bases on their home soil and seven services have declared initial operating capability for the aircraft.

Northrop Grumman Demonstrates Antenna Sharing, Pattern Capabilities

LINTHICUM, Md. – Northrop Grumman Corp., in partnership with the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (NRL), successfully completed a test in the development of the Integrated Topside (InTop) Low-Level Resource Allocation Manager (LLRAM) program last month at NRL’s test facility in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, the company said in an Oct. 28 release.

LLRAM in conjunction with the InTop Electronic Warfare/Information Operations/Communications (EW/IO/COMMS) system demonstrated the simultaneous sharing of a single

antenna, while flexing its adaptable size and antenna pattern capabilities, and performing a mission that would have required multiple dedicated antennas in the past. The significance of the test is to enable future antenna reductions on ships that are already capacity-constrained, allowing for more advanced warfighting capabilities in an ever-increasingly complex battlespace environment.

“The Northrop Grumman/NRL demonstration of LLRAM concepts was conducted in the same environment that proved crucial to the development of the SEWIP Block 3 EDM [Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program Block 3 Engineering Development Model],” said Mike Meaney, vice president, maritime electronic and information warfare, Northrop Grumman.

“The efficiency of signal sharing capabilities, scalability and advanced resource management capabilities developed on the Low-Level Resource Allocation Manager program will allow for a significantly reduced footprint topside.”

The demonstration showed that the EW/IO/COMMS Advanced Development Model for SEWIP Block 3 can serve as a platform for proving out advanced multi-function concepts using existing NRL test assets.

LLRAM and EW/IO/COMMS were developed under the Office of Naval Research Electromagnetic Maneuver Warfare Command and Control Integrated Topside Innovative Naval Prototype. The system leverages four active Electronically Scanned Arrays (low-band transmit/receive and high-band transmit/receive) and intended platforms include cruisers, destroyers and aircraft carriers.

Coast Guard Cutter Spencer Returns Home After $19 Million Drug Bust in Eastern Pacific

Coast Guard Cutter Spencer patrols the Atlantic Ocean with a MH-65 helicopter aboard. U.S. Coast Guard

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Spencer returned to Boston on Oct. 27 after conducting an 80-day counter-drug patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard's 1st District said in a release.

Spencer's crew seized about 700 kilograms of cocaine, valued at $19 million, after interdicting a smuggling vessel.

The crew's patrol spanned more than 14,000 nautical miles and focused on enforcing international counter-trafficking laws, supporting U.S. partnerships with Central and South American countries and helping to preserve national security.

The crew also responded to multiple search-and-rescue cases, including a distress call from an aircraft experiencing engine failure.

"Spencer's crew is happy to be home and is looking forward to spending time with family and friends in their homeport of Boston … during the holidays," said Cmdr. Thomas Rodzewicz, the cutter's commanding officer.

Spencer is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a crew of 100.

Geurts: Weapons Elevator Experts Being Assembled for Ford Class Carriers

The USS Gerald R. Ford steams in the Atlantic Ocean on Oct. 27. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Connor Loessin

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's top acquisitions official said all advanced weapons elevators (AWE) on the new aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford will be operational by 18 months after post-delivery trials and testing begins and that a team of experts will be formed to carry over lessons learned as the AWEs are installed in each new carrier of the Ford class.

James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, told media at an Oct. 28 Pentagon roundtable that Huntington Ingalls' Newport News Shipbuilding will form a team of experts on the installation and repair of the AWEs that will carry over as the next three carriers (CVNs 79, 80 and 81) follow the Gerald R. Ford in construction. The Navy will form a team of AWE experts to certify the installation.

The AWEs are one of five major technologies introduced on the Ford and have proven to be the most troublesome. The ship's dual band radar, electromagnetic aircraft launch system and advanced arresting gear and new-design nuclear reactor are all doing well in trials, but the 11 AWEs – crucial to bringing ordnance up to the flight deck rapidly enough to provide the carrier's design sortie generation rate – have proven difficult to install and operate.

Geurts, who visited the Gerald R. Ford at sea on Oct. 27, said the Navy has certified the three upper AWEs (plus one utility or medevac elevator). Newport News Shipbuilding is working on the seven elevators that operate from the ship's two weapons magazines.

He said that seven remaining AWEs will be installed and certified in sequence to allow access to both the fore and aft magazines to ensure that both are accessible as early as possible as redundancy develops. Three of the lower AWEs were exercised during the carrier's first at-sea period this year while Geurts was visiting the ship in preparation for certification.

The goal for the Navy is to have all 11 AWEs operational by the time the 18-month post-delivery trials and testing is completed in mid-2021.

During the testing, the carrier will be put through several trials, including re-certification of its flight deck, the arresting gear, the catapults, fuel system and many other systems.

During the recent trials attended by Geurts, the Ford's propulsion plant was tested at full throttle. "The propulsion plant activities are looking pretty solid," he said.

Geurts said the Navy is building a full digital twin of the AWE and is building a land-based test site for it at Naval Surface Warfare Center Philadelphia to troubleshoot any AWE issues. He said that adjusting the AWEs for the next carrier, John F. Kennedy, will not require a huge amount of work.

USS John S. McCain Returns to Warfighting Readiness

The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS John S. McCain, at sea again after completing repairs and upgrades following an August 2017 collision with a tanker that killed several crew members and injured others. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sarah Villegas

YOKOSUKA, Japan – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain completed its necessary repairs and is underway to conduct comprehensive at-sea testing, according to a U.S. Pacific Fleet release.

The ship underwent repairs and extensive and accelerated upgrades over the last two years following an August 2017 collision with a tanker ship off the coast of Singapore that left 10 of the McCain's crew dead and another five injured.

During the at-sea testing, the ship and her crew will perform a series of demonstrations to evaluate the ship's onboard systems. Among the systems that will be tested are navigation, damage control, mechanical and electrical systems, combat systems, communications and propulsion application.

USS John S. McCain, assigned to Destroyer Squadron 15 (DS 15) and forward-deployed to Yokosuka, completed her in-port phase of training and will continue at-sea training in the upcoming months to certify in every mission area the ship is required to perform and prepare for return to normal operations.

"The USS John S. McCain embodies the absolute fighting spirit

of her namesakes and shows the resiliency of our Sailors. She has completed her maintenance period with the most up-to-date multimission offensive and defensive capabilities, preparing her to successfully execute a multitude of high-end operations," said Capt. Steven DeMoss, commander of DS 15.

"This whole crew is eager to get back to sea, and that's evident in the efforts they've made over the last two years to bring the ship back to fighting shape and the energy they've put into preparing themselves for the rigors of at-sea operations," said Cmdr. Ryan T. Easterday, USS John S. McCain's commanding officer.