Coast Guard Demobilizes Two Alaska Forward Operating Locations

KODIAK, Alaska – Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak aircrews demobilized forward operating locations (FOLs) in St. Paul and Cold Bay on March 15, concluding the supplemental coverage of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Chain, the Coast Guard 17th District said in a March 25 release.

The aircrews deployed on two-week rotations to increase readiness and decrease response times to the Bering Sea fishing fleet during periods of increased maritime activity.

Air Station Kodiak MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter aircrews deployed to Cold Bay from Oct. 20 to Nov. 20, 2018, and then again from Jan. 15 to Feb. 19, 2019. Aircrews later deployed to St. Paul from Feb. 17 to March 15 in support of Coast Guard operations in the Bering Sea to provide search-and-rescue and maritime law-enforcement coverage.

In addition to the deployed Jayhawk aircrew, the Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley, the Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro and the Coast Guard Cutter John Midgett, with an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aircrew embarked, provided supplemental SAR support and maritime law-enforcement coverage in the Bering Sea.

Throughout the three-month season, Coast Guard assets and crews conducted 24 SAR cases and provided more than 114 SAR hours, resulting in 19 lives saved and 29 assisted.

Due to the fishing fleet moving further north in the Bering Sea and to augment the cutter presence, Air Station Kodiak increased its readiness by deploying crews to St. Paul. Before re-opening the St. Paul FOL, it had been without a deployed

crew since 2014.

To meet mission requirements, aircrews performed 15 HC-130 Hercules airplane logistics flights, totaling more than 90 flight hours from Kodiak to St. Paul. While forward-deployed, St. Paul MH-60 aircrews responded to two cases, resulting in one life saved and five assisted.

“This has been a great Bering Sea deployment season, and as the fleet shifted further north, it was an all-hands-on-deck evolution to mobilize our crews and reopen our facility in St. Paul mid-season,” said Lt. Cmdr. Tom Huntley, Air Station Kodiak Jayhawk assistant operations officer. “This shift allowed us to maintain our search-and-rescue posture and protect our critical fishing industry, and it allowed us to be ready and responsive when called upon.”

Both FOLs are part of the Coast Guard’s mobile presence and as such are focused on performing the services’ statutory missions to ensure maritime safety, security and stewardship throughout Alaska.

To follow the fishing fleet and to prepare for the projected increased summer maritime activity, Jayhawk aircrews are scheduled to deploy to FOLs in both Cordova and Kotzebue.

Navy Awards New Contract to Austal for Expeditionary Fast Transport Ships 13 and 14

Mobile, Alabama – The U.S. Navy awarded Austal USA a $261.8

million contract for the 13th and 14th Expeditionary Fast Transport ships (EPFs) on March 25, Austal said in a release.

The new contract not only expands Austal's current 12-ship EPF program but sets the company and the Navy up for a potential transition to more medically based variants of the high-speed transport.

The now slightly over $2 billion 14-ship total value of the EPF program underscores the ability of Austal to build highly capable ships at an affordable cost in its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, according to Austal. As Austal prepares to execute these latest contracts, the company's advanced ship design division is looking at revolutionary designs for future warfighting capability and support from the EPF.

"This contract reflects the confidence the U.S. Navy has in Austal's talented workforce to build these highly capable, cost-effective ships," Austal USA President Craig Perciavalle said. "It's exciting to see how the EPF ships are supporting the MSC fleet in so many different capacities. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the fleet with the addition of EPF 13 and 14 and beyond."

The EPF's large, open-mission deck and large habitability spaces allow it to conduct a wide range of missions – from engagement and humanitarian assistance to disaster relief and from maritime security support operations to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

With a draft of only 13 feet and a unique propulsion system, the EPF's ability to access austere and degraded ports with minimal external assistance provides an overabundance of options to fleet and combatant commanders, Austal USA said. With their draft, propulsion system, large mission bay and speed above 40 knots, these ships have the potential to support future requirements in special operations, command and

control and medical support.

Austal’s EPF program has delivered 10 ships, and two more under construction at its headquarters and ship manufacturing facility in Mobile.

Military Sealift Command Opens New Center for Excellence

NEWPORT NEWS, Virginia (NNS) – Military Sealift Command hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to signify the opening of its new Center for Excellence located on Joint Base Langley-Eustis on March 25.

The Military Sealift Command Center for Excellence provides MSC-centric basic training for newly employed civil-service mariners (CIVMAR).

“Ultimately, the new Military Sealift Command Center for Excellence is replacing the MSC training center in Earl, New Jersey,” said Military Sealift Command Total Force Management Director Mike Morris, who co-officiated the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “Over the next year all of the newly hired MSC civil service mariner training is transitioning from Earl to Joint Base Langley-Eustis.

“Shifting our basic training to our new facility will mean that our new CIVMARs won’t have to be transported to the old training facility thus saving money while being more convenient and less stressful for our new teammates,” Morris added.

All newly hired civil service mariners must complete the MSC-centric, basic training curriculum to be qualified to sail in MSC's fleet.

"The new training facility is ultimately going to be MSC's 'boot camp.' This is where all of our new CIVMARs will receive the required basic training to be able to sail with MSC," said Bill Kordyjak, Military Sealift Command's Afloat Training Team director.

"Right now, the facility is providing in-seat training such as trip hazard aboard ships and first aid. In the near future, we will provide hands-on laboratory training simulators to meet the practical requirements of MSC's training pipe-line," Kordyjak added. "Also in the near future, current CIVMARs will be able to return to the new training facility to obtain required re-qualifications and re-certifications."

All laboratory training requirements such as firefighting and damage control simulators soon will be located at the MSC Center for Excellence.

Newly hired civil service mariner and student in Military Sealift Command Center of Excellence's first class Kiandra Wilson said, "So far the training at the new facility is going really well," and she is excited about her opportunities as a CIVMAR.

Military Sealift Command is responsible for the safe and efficient operation of 125 civilian-crewed ships that provide underway replenishment-at-sea for U.S. Navy and allies ships, conduct specialized missions, preposition combat cargo at sea around the world, provide a variety of support services and move military equipment and supplies to deployed U.S. Forces.

SECNAV Names Future Destroyer in Honor of U.S. Navy Medal of Honor Awardee

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WASHINGTON (March 18, 2019) An artist rendering of the future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS William Charette (DDG 131). (U.S. Navy photo illustration/Released)
WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer has named a future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, DDG 130, in honor of a Medal of Honor recipient, Hospital Corpsman Master Chief William Charette, the secretary's public affairs office said in a March 18 release.

Charette, a native of Ludington, Michigan, joined the Navy in 1951 and served in the Korean War in the Fleet Marine Force as a hospital corpsman attached to Company F, Third Platoon, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

"The actions of Hospital Corpsman William Charette will neither be forgotten or diminished," Spencer said. "Charette put himself at extreme risk during intense combat to render aid to Marines in need. His efforts saved lives, and I am honored that his legacy will live on in the future USS William Charette [DDG 130]."

Charette was presented the Medal of Honor for his actions on March 27, 1953, when Chinese soldiers in North Korea attacked and overran two of three hill outposts that Marines held. During a counterattack, an enemy grenade landed near Charette, who was helping a wounded Marine. Charette placed himself on top of the Marine to shield him from the explosion. The blast rendered Charette unconscious, but when he awoke he continued to aid Marines, including using torn parts of his uniform to dress battle wounds, his own battle vest to shield a wounded

Marine, and exposing himself to incoming rounds to carry wounded Marines to safety.

All five enlisted Sailors who received the Medal of Honor for actions during the Korean War were Navy hospital corpsmen attached to the Marine Corps. Charette was the only living recipient. Charette passed on March 18, 2012, due to complications from heart surgery.

Arleigh-Burke class destroyers conduct a variety of operations from peacetime presence and crisis response to sea control and power projection. The future USS William Charette will be a Flight III destroyer, capable of fighting air, surface and subsurface battles simultaneously, and will contain a combination of offensive and defensive weapon systems designed to support maritime warfare, including integrated air and missile defense and vertical launch capabilities.

The ship will be constructed at Bath Iron Works, a division of General Dynamics in Bath, Maine. The ship will be 509 feet long, have a beam length of 59 feet and be capable of operating at speeds in excess of 30 knots.

Fire Aboard USS Devastator; No Injuries

NSA BAHRAIN – A fire broke out aboard the mine countermeasures ship USS Devastator (MCM 6) while the ship was pierside at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain on March 14, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

There were no injuries in the fire, which broke out about 8

p.m. local time. The extent of the damage is being assessed, and the cause of the fire is under investigation, according to the release from the 5th Fleet.

Sailors aboard Devastator, USS Sentry (MCM 3), USS Gladiator (MCM 11), USS Dextrous (MCM 13) and USS Whirlwind (PC 11), as well as the NSA Bahrain Fire Department, responded to the fire. The ship declared the fire out at about 9 p.m. local time, and crew continued to cool hot spots to prevent a reflash.

Devastator is one of 21 forward-deployed ships to the U.S. 5th Fleet, whose area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is made up of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab el Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

Navy Awards Raytheon Contract for Next 3 SPY-6 Radars for Destroyers

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has ordered three shipsets of the Raytheon-built SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar (AMDR) for installation on three Arleigh Burke Flight III guided-missile destroyers (DDGs).

Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems has been awarded a $402.6 million fixed-price-incentive (firm target) modification to previously-awarded contract to exercise Low-Rate Initial

Production options for three SPY-6(V)1 radars, the Defense Department announced on March 14.

The SPY-6(V)1 replaces the SPY-1 in the Aegis Combat System in the forthcoming Flight III DDGs. It features 37 radar module assemblies (RMAs) on four fixed antenna faces.

The order brings to seven the number of AMDR radars ordered for the Arleigh Burke DDG program. The work will be performed in Marlborough, Massachusetts, and is expected to be completed by March 2023.

“We are on track right now with Shipset One, which we plan to deliver to Huntington Ingalls next year for [DDG]125,” said Scott Spence, Raytheon’s director of Naval Radars in a March 15 teleconference with reporters.

Raytheon also is developing the SPY-6(V)2 Enterprise Air Surveillance Radar (EASR). Spence said the Engineering and Manufacturing Development model of the EASR was delivered to the Navy’s test site at Wallops Island, Virginia, on March 11 and installed on a test tower the next day. This rotating radar, equipped with nine radar module assemblies (3 by 3 on a rotating face), will be tested for six months through the summer, with its air-traffic control and weather capabilities testing being included. Spence said that testing will lead into orders of long-lead materials for full-rate production of the EASR, expected to begin in late summer or the fall of 2019. The SPY-6(V)2 will be fitted onto amphibious assault ships and older aircraft carriers to replace the SPS-48/49 radars.

Spence said the SPY-6(V)3, three sets of 9-RMA fixed-face antennas of the EASR for ships including new aircraft carriers, also is aimed for Full-Rate Production by the end of 2019.

The company also is working on a lighter version of the AMDR for back-fitting on the Flight IIA DDGs. This radar would

feature 24 radar module assemblies on fixed faces.

HII Completes Installation of Main Mast on USS George Washington

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. –Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division has reached new heights in the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73), the company announced in a March 15 release. The shipyard installed the final piece of the ship's new main mast – the 34-foot upper mast section – that raises the ship's distinctive profile 123 feet above the flight deck. The RCOH is now 50 percent complete.

"Landing the upper mast is one of the most visible construction milestones in the mid-life refueling overhaul and maintenance availability of an aircraft carrier," said Chris Miner, Newport News' vice president, in-service aircraft carrier programs. "We are making significant progress with George Washington and look forward to returning a fully recapitalized, mission-ready ship to the fleet for another 25 years of service."

To commemorate the milestone, George Washington sailors on March 15 held a brief mast-stepping ceremony that recognizes an ancient maritime custom of placing a coin underneath the ship's mast to bring good fortune. A time capsule containing photos, a piece of the old mast, several coins and other artifacts was attached to a metal plate, which later will be welded under the mast.

“Mast-stepping is a way to link the past with the future,” said Capt. Glenn Jamison, the ship’s commanding officer. “It is a way to honor the heritage of this ship and our namesake. George Washington once said that ‘without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious.’ Now, with this new mast signifying the progress we’re making during RCOH, USS George Washington is ready to carry on the mantle of representing the Navy as only Gen. George Washington could have imagined and wanted.”

The ship arrived at Newport News in August 2017 to begin the complex engineering and construction project and is in dry dock for hull and freeboard blasting and painting; repairs to its propellers, sea chests, shafts and rudders; and defueling and refueling of its power plant.

George Washington, the sixth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier to undergo this major life-cycle milestone, is on track for delivery in 2021.

Video here

Proposed 2020 Budget Promises Major Funding for Marine Aviation and Ground Combat Programs, Hurricane Repair

The fiscal year 2020 national defense budget unveiled March 12 provides substantial funding for the Marine Corps’ major aviation and ground combat programs and promises help in

repairing the heavy damage inflicted on its East Coast bases by hurricanes last year.

The proposed defense funding would buy 10 more fifth-generation F-35B strike fighters for the Marines, six CH-53K heavy lift helicopters, 56 Amphibious Combat Vehicles to replace the aged AAV-7s, additional Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, the advanced Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar, HIMARS rocket artillery systems and an early attempt to provide defenses against unmanned aerial vehicles.

Despite a robust Navy shipbuilding fund that would buy 12 ships and two large unmanned vessels, the proposed $205.6 billion total Department of the Navy (DON) budget does nothing to advance the Marines' decades-long quest for 38 amphibious combat ships, holding the gator fleet at the current 33 ships. The five-year budget plan shows the next America-class amphibious assault ship, LHA-9, would not be bought until fiscal 2024, despite an urgent appeal by the amphibious shipbuilding coalition to avoid an eight-year construction gap that could wreak havoc on the shipyard.

The total proposed Marine Corps funding of $45.9 billion provides for an end-strength increase of only 100, for a total of 186,200 active-duty Marines, and holds the Marine Corps Reserves at the current 38,500. But that small gain in personnel is in keeping with Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller's goal of focusing his resources on accelerated improvements in modernization and combat readiness, rather than more people.

And within the stable end-strength numbers are substantial changes in specialties, with some shifts from basic ground combat capabilities to "Marines with special skills," including special operations, and intelligence, electronic, information and cyberwarfare, the DON's budget book said. That reflects Neller's drive to produce "a more experienced, better trained and more capable force," the budget said.

Those personnel realignments are in response to the U.S. military's overall shift from nearly two decades of anti-terrorism and counter-insurgency fighting to preparing for the return of great power competition against peer adversaries.

Keel Laid on Future USS Bougainville

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The keel-laying and authentication ceremony for the future USS Bougainville (LHA 8) was held March 14 at the Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) Pascagoula shipyard, the Naval Sea Systems command said in a release.

The ship's sponsor, Ellyn Dunford, authenticated the keel by having her initials welded into the keel plate.

Traditionally, keel laying marks the first step in ship construction. However, with today's advanced modular shipbuilding, the keel-laying ceremony now recognizes the joining together of a ship's components and is a major milestone in the ship's construction. Fabrication of Bougainville began in October.

"We are honored to have Ellyn Dunford with us today to commemorate this milestone," said Tom Rivers, Amphibious Warfare program manager, PEO Ships. "The production team has made steady progress and we look forward to bringing the next generation of amphibious capabilities to Navy and Marine Corps warfighters."

The future USS Bougainville is the third ship of the America (LHA 6) class of amphibious assault ships built to facilitate

forward presence and power projection. LHA 8 is the first Flight I ship of the America class with a reincorporated well deck to increase operational flexibility while maximizing the aviation capability inherent on the Flight 0 ships, USS America and the future USS Tripoli.

Designed to support the Marine Corps tenets of Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver, America class ships are capable of rapid combat power buildup ashore the America class accommodates the Marine Corps' Air Combat Element, including F-35B Joint Strike Fighter and MV-22 Osprey, essential to maintaining power projection, air superiority and theater logistics.

HII's Pascagoula shipyard also is in production on Tripoli (LHA 7), the guided-missile destroyers Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), Lenah H. Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123), Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), and amphibious transport dock ships, Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28) and Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29). The shipyard also is

under contract for six Flight III Arleigh Burke class destroyers awarded as part of the fiscal 2018-2022 multiyear procurement.

Navy Secretary Names New Class of Towing, Salvage and Rescue Ship Navajo

WASHINGTON (Jan. 29, 2019) An artist rendering of the future USNS Navajo (T-TATS 6). (U.S. Navy photo

illustration/Released)
WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said the new class of towing, salvage and rescue ship will be named Navajo in honor of the major contributions the Navajo people have made to the armed forces, the secretary's public affairs office said in a March 12 release.

The new class of vessels will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships. The first ship of this class will be named USNS Navajo and designated T-ATS 6.

"The Navajo people have fought and served our armed forces with honor and valor in nearly every major conflict since the birth of our nation, so it is fitting and right to name a new class of ship in their honor," Spencer said. "The Navajo class of towing, salvage and rescue ships will serve our nation and continue the legacy of the Navajo people, and all Native Americans."

The contract includes options for potentially seven additional vessels, and each additional ship will be named in honor of prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

Gulf Island Shipyards was awarded a $63.5 million contract for the detail design and construction of the new towing, salvage and rescue ship, which will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships in service with the U.S. Military Sealift Command.

The T-ATS will serve as open ocean towing vessels and will additionally support salvage operations and submarine rescue missions. The first ship in the class will be built at the company's shipyard in Houma, La., and is expected to be completed in March 2021.