

Marine Corps Looking at Future Light Helicopter Replacement



The Marine Corps hopes to field the successor to the UH-1Y Venom, shown here, and the AH-1Z Viper in the late 2020s or early 2030s. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Sabrina Candiaflores

NATIONAL

HARBOR, Md. – The Marine Corps and the Army are running an analysis of

alternatives (AOA) to see whether the two services can meet the same requirements

for Milestone A or B start in fiscal 2021, a Marine helicopter acquisition

official said. The AOA is expected to be complete in the “next couple of months.”

Speaking May

6 to an audience at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor,

Maryland, Marine Col. David C. Walsh, program manager for Marine light attack

helicopters, said the Marine Corps has begun studies for its Attack Utility

Replacement Aircraft to succeed the UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper helicopters.

The Corps

hopes to field the Future Vertical Lift Capabilities Set 3 by the late 2020s or

early 2030s, Walsh said.

A key

requirement for the Marine Corps is an aircraft that can keep

up with or even exceed the speed of an MV-22B Osprey, 310 knots.

Bell

Helicopter delivered the last of 160 UH-1Ys in April 2018 and has delivered 111 of 189 AH-1Zs to date. The last AH-1Z deliveries are scheduled for 2022.

Bahrain and Pakistan also have purchased AH-1Zs, while Turkey and Taiwan have procured the older AH-1W.

Walsh said

that there is considerable foreign military sales potential for the UH-1Y and AH-1Z. He listed potential for 88 AH-1Zs and 29 UH-1Ys in Europe, 129 AH-1Zs in the Asia-Pacific region, and 44 AH-1Zs and 24 UH-1Ys in the Middle East and North Africa.

Walsh also

said his office is working on capability upgrades to the Corps' H-1 fleet, including Link 16, full-motion video, the Joint Air-Ground Missile, and the AIM-9X Sidewinder air-to-air missile, as well as some navigational upgrades.

Nation's Sealift Struggling,

but Gaining Attention



Panelists at the Strategic Sealift discussion on May 7 at Sea-Air-Space 2019 talk about maintaining capability overseas.

Charles Fazio

NATIONAL HARBOR,

Md. – The nation’s strategic sealift has languished for too many years, a panel

of experts told an audience May 7 at Sea-Air-Space 2019. And the panel,

representing the military and civilian sea services, told the morning program attendees

that the time for revitalizing sealift is now.

Countering the

somewhat bleak picture they drew, they all expressed optimism with the fact

that the issue is finally garnering the attention it deserves.

“We are facing one

of the greatest maritime challenges in U.S. history,” said Kevin Toharsky, the

associate administrator of the U.S. Maritime Administration, who moderated the

panel. “The good news is the sea power we need ... is back on the radar screen.”

Toharsky outlined

the significant decline in the number of U.S.-flagged merchant ships, which

meant the loss of jobs for mariners. The commercial fleet is essential to the

nation’s commerce and national security, he said. Commercial cargo of fuel and

goods rely on it, as does the military. In contrast, potential

adversaries like
China are bolstering their maritime industries – and their
world presence in
the process, he said.

“I’m encouraged by
the greater awareness ... and the conversation about the
problem,” said Coast
Guard Rear Adm. John Nadeau, who is assistant commandant for
prevention policy.

Resolution,
however, “won’t be easy,” Nadeau said. “The material condition
[of the merchant
fleet] didn’t happen overnight and won’t be corrected
overnight.”

Ensuring that the
parties involved – including military and commercial
stakeholders – are
striking the right partnerships, engaging in transparency and
carrying out open
and frank dialogues, will set the nation on the right track,
Nadeau said.

“We need industry
support,” said Erica Plath, the Navy’s director of strategic
mobility, as she
described the Navy’s plans to modernize its fleet of deep-sea
transports through
the acquisition of both new and refurbished older vessels.

Chris Thayer, director
of ship management at Military Sealift Command, alluded to a
downward trend in
available sealift capacity during the past two years.

The command is
implementing a “robust effort” to restore readiness that would

require a holistic approach to address aging ships and construction and refurbishment efforts as well as crew-training requirements.

Capt. Christian Spain, vice president of government relations for the American Maritime Officers Union, said revitalization is essential if the nation intends to address the current shortage of 1,800 merchant seamen.

“It doesn’t affect sealift at the initial [point],” Spain said. “But at four to six months, it does.”

Similar to submarines, merchant ships require two crews that rotate sea tours, Spain said. The crew shortage figure has been steady since 2013, he said, but would increase to 2,000 within the next two to three years if not addressed.

“The time is now,” Spain said.

Navy Undersecretary Echoes February Report in Call for ‘Agile’ Education for Future Sailors



Undersecretary of the Navy Thomas Modly (right), with moderator Francis Rose, host of “Government Matters,” at a May 7 breakfast program at Sea-Air-Space 2019. Ian Herbst Photography.

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Undersecretary of the Navy Thomas Modly used much of his breakfast address here May 7 at Sea-Air-Space 2019 to reinforce the results of an “Education for Seapower” study and report that called for a more agile education infrastructure that develops Sailors and leaders for “this era of uncertainty.”

“We cannot take our eye off the ball in developing people,” he said, adding that young people come to U.S. Navy service with more technological acumen and expecting a different experience and lifestyle than prior generations. “We have to think of the kinds of kids we recruit.”

The undersecretary emphasized the February report’s findings that called for a top-down review of how Sailors and future Navy leaders are educated, from ROTC programs to basic training and beyond to continuing education and leadership training. The interview-laden report also showed that a naval university system should be created and that a new chief learning officer (CLO) be appointed.



Rose and Modly at the Sea-Air-Space breakfast program May 7. Ian Herbst Photography.

“We need to get that key leader in place,” Modly told the audience at the breakfast, which was moderated by Francis Rose, host of “Government Matters.”

When questioned about the qualifications the new CLO should possess, Modly mentioned the CLO’s background should include

some U.S. military service and experience in a large university system. He also emphasized that the Navy's budget for education is small and must be expanded.

Later when questioned, Modly veered off education and mentioned the need to distribute "lethality" to even the smallest of U.S. Navy ships, mentioning the frigate class, and even advocated for armed unmanned vessels. "We need a lot more distributed lethality," he said.

Rescue Swimmer Program Starts After Tragedy at Sea

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Coast Guard rescue swimmer program was born after a deadly ship sinking in 1983 off the coast of Virginia that claimed the lives of 31 people.

During a stormy February night, the 605-foot SS Marine Electric, a bulk carrying ship, capsized about 30 miles off the coast of Chincoteague, Virginia.

The service sent a helicopter to assist in the rescue mission. At that time the Coast Guard did not have any rescue swimmers, and when they would respond to a distress call, they'd lower the basket and the person in the water would have to swim toward it to then be raised up inside

the helicopter.

“Unfortunately, it didn’t always work the best,” Aviation Survival Technician Chief Petty Officer Eric Biehn said during a floor presentation.

The service spent two hours trying to rescue the 34 people in the water after the ship capsized, but with the weather conditions, and freezing water, was unable to lift anyone up. The Navy came, as they had rescues swimmers at the time, and was able to save three lives with their rescue swimmer.

The following year, the Coast Guard put funding in start a rescue swimmer program in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1984.

“That maritime disaster was enough to wake up Congress and the United States,” Biehn said.

By 1985, the first team of rescue swimmers was deployed to a base in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and by 1991 the program was fully deployed in 23 bases.

Unmanned Systems Cited as Key by Future of Aviation

Panelists



The Navy has previously teamed the MQ-8 Fire Scout UAS and MH-60s helicopters in a squadron. Northrop Grumman.

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md.

– Future naval aviation will benefit from the fifth-generation F-35s,

manned-unmanned teaming and the possibility of greatly enhanced rotary wing

aircraft being developed under the Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program, a panel

of Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard officials said.

The naval

services also are focusing on improving the readiness of their existing

aircraft, and some types of aircraft are coming close to meeting the 80% readiness

goal set by former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, the officials told a forum on

the future of naval aviation at the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space

exposition May 6.

Lt. Gen. Steven

Rudder, deputy Marine Corps commandant for aviation, said the Corps' legacy

FA-18 Hornets hit the 80% readiness mark last week and were maintaining

availabilities in the high 70% rate. And the Corps' new F-35Bs were operating

in the 70% range during their recent deployments in the western Pacific, Rudder

said.

Angie

Knappenberger, deputy director for naval warfare, said the Navy conducted a study to determine what would be needed to improve readiness and found that “we wouldn’t get there unless we changed our processes.” They have had to improve their support infrastructure, which had suffered from the years of reduced funding under sequestration and on the spare parts supply system, she said.

Looking to the future, Rudder, Knappenberger and Vice Adm. Daniel Abel, the Coast Guard deputy commandant for operations and a veteran helicopter pilot, all cited unmanned systems they were looking to add.

“Autonomy is really hard, but there are some things you can do,” and they are seeing a lot of focus on manned-unmanned teaming, Knappenberger said. She cited the Navy’s teaming of the MQ-8 Fire Scout UAS and MH-60s helicopters in a squadron and will do the same thing with the MQ-4C Triton long-range UAS and the P-8A patrol aircraft.

Rudder said the Marines were narrowing their focus on requirements for their primary unmanned aircraft program, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force Unmanned Expeditionary system, commonly called MUX, which is to be a large Group 5 rotary-wing UAS that can operate from amphibious ships. After initially looking at a wide range

of capabilities, including strike, the Marines currently are leaning toward an early warning platform that could provide over-the-horizon surveillance and network communications for the expeditionary task forces.

Rudder said the Marines also are closely monitoring the Army-led FVL program, which is intended to produce a rotary-wing manned aircraft with much higher speed and range than current helicopters. Although the two prototypes being produced for the FVL program are a composite helicopter and a tilt-rotor, Rudder said the Marines' preference is a tilt-rotor because they know their tilt-rotor MV-22 Ospreys are fast and they want something that can keep up with them.

Abel said the Coast Guard has been testing contractor-operated Scan Eagle UAS on their national security cutters and are looking at other unmanned systems.

Navy Unmanned Maritime Systems Office Expects Major Developments in Next Couple Years



The Orca extra-large UUV recently completed its design stage.

Lockheed Martin

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Navy’s Unmanned Maritime Systems program office is juggling the development of a lot of unmanned surface and underwater vehicles right now, and they expect numerous big developments for several programs in the next year or two.

Capt. Pete Small, Unmanned Maritime Systems program manager, told attendees at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space symposium May 6 that a new draft request for proposals was recently released for a medium unmanned surface vehicle (USV), and the Navy was “aggressively” moving forward with that program.

The Navy is also accelerating a large USV program, and an analysis of alternatives for that effort will wrap up by the end of this year, Small added. The program hopes for a fiscal 2020 start for that platform, and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson personally wants to see the project bear fruit “ASAP,” the captain said.

On the unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV) side of the house, the extra-large UUV Orca recently finished the design phase. It will feature a modular payload and the Navy hopes to take delivery at the end of calendar year 2020, with buys continuing through 2022, Small said.

The Snakehead large-displacement UUV is expected to complete its critical design review this quarter, and the Navy hopes to have it in the water by fiscal 2021.

And the Razorback, slated for the fiscal 2020 timeframe, would be hosted on a submarine and the Navy is developing a torpedo tube-launched version. The Navy recently issued a request for information on that project and received some responses from industry.

Saudi LCS Construction to Begin by End of 2019



The Saudi version of the LCS will be modeled off of the Freedom-class littoral combat ships, like the USS Sioux City (LCS 11) and USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) shown here. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Marianne Guemo NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Construction on a version of the Littoral Combat Ship for the government of Saudi Arabia is on track to start by the end of this calendar year, according to a Navy official.

Ghadeer Halim, deputy program manager for International Small Combatants (PMS 525), said after a presentation from her program office at Navy League's Sea-Air-Space symposium May 6 that the current plan calls for the construction of four LCSs for the Saudi government with the option for four more for a possible total of eight ships.

Lockheed Martin was awarded a \$282 million contract for design and materials for the construction of the four Multi-Mission Surface Combatant ships back in November.

The ships will differ from the U.S. Navy LCS in that the module will be permanent and fixed rather than replaceable with a different module.

The United States and Saudi Arabia came to an agreement on an \$11.2 billion deal back in 2015 that included a modified version of the LCS.

The ship would be based on Lockheed's Freedom-class LCS, one of two different LCS types. (Austal USA builds the

Indo-Pacific Policy More Complex Than Only China and Russia



Panelists discuss the complexities of a region dominated by two near-peer superpowers but also full of friendly nations. Seapower / Victoria Bottlick

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – As the nation grapples with striking a balance between competing with great power challenges and preparing for the possibility of conflict, the Indo-Pacific region poses perhaps the most significant challenge, Dr. Mara Karlin believes.

Karlin, director of strategic studies at the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies, made that observation as she introduced a panel of four military and civilian government experts, each of whom plays a key role in formulating related policies in the region.

It stands to reason that each panelist recognized the increasing threats posed by China and Russia. Still, they noted that the matrix is considerably more complicated.

Eyes cannot be focused on the two large superpowers at the expense of other

friendly nations in the region. Also, while China and Russia loom as potential adversaries, it is imperative that the U.S. and its partners work as closely together with them on areas of common interest.

Representing the Coast Guard and Marine Corps, Vice Adm. Linda Fagan and Gayle Von Eckartsburg discussed how each respective service shares a forward-deployed mission that makes their presence essential in the Pacific. Both Fagan and Von Eckartsburg emphasized that neither service is a "garrison force."

"The Coast Guard has never been more relevant," said Fagan, the service's Pacific Area commander. "The demand for the signal we bring into the region has never been higher."

Besides watching Chinese and Russian activities and fostering goodwill among allies, Fagan placed equal importance in "modeling legitimate behavior," so that "China can see what a responsible Coast Guard looks like."

If the Chinese can learn from the U.S. Coast Guard how to conduct, for example, more effective search-and-rescue operations, so be it.

Von Eckartsburg, director of the Marine Corps Pacific Division office of Plans, Policy and Operations, described a "persistent forward force." Of the

roughly 40,000

Marines now deployed around the world, the vast majority is west of the International Dateline, she said.

“We’re in a constant state of motion, leveraging presence to maintain readiness at the same time,” Von Eckartsburg said.

Joel Szabat the Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation and International Affairs, discussed the three most important “pillars” of stability in the region – economy, governance and security.

“We need to remember that this is not about containing or encircling any one country,” Szabat said. “We want to help people, regardless of who our competitors are.”

Security commitments with U.S. allies would assure the free flow of commerce, Szabat said. The nation faces significant related challenges in this arena, he believes. U.S. sealift is old and needs to be recapitalized, he said. The size of the U.S. merchant fleet, which handles much of the military’s sealift capability, is good enough for small-to-medium operations.

“We don’t have enough mariners, or U.S.-flagged merchant marine,” Szabat said.

Walter Douglas, who heads the State Department Bureau of East Asian and

Pacific Affairs, cited an Asian Development Bank statistic that states the region needs an estimated \$1.7 trillion in investment to sustain healthy economic growth.

“There’s nowhere near that amount of money available in one state,” Szabat said.

The emphasis, then, would be to have “money centers” and corporations step in with “transparent” investments. The government and private sectors would ensure that such funding would not be subject to the troubles endemic to secret deals.

“That money gets spent in the wrong places,” Szabat said. “We can’t have that. We need open governance. We have to see [to it] that investment laws are transparent.”

Equally imperative, Douglas said, is working to ensure that investments are evenly distributed. While putting money into traditional stable partners like Japan, Australia and Singapore would remain important, more could be done to help open emerging economies. He said that Vietnam, for example, badly wants help developing its infrastructure – from anywhere but China.

Raytheon, Navy Conduct Joint Test of Excalibur N5



Raytheon's sea-based Excalibur N5 projectile will more than double the maximum range of conventional 5-inch munitions and provide the same accuracy as the land-based version. U.S. Department of Defense

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. Navy and Raytheon conducted a joint test of the Excalibur N5 munition with an eye toward firing it from Arleigh Burke-class destroyer Mk 45 guns, according to a Raytheon official.

The Navy has not made a decision on whether to buy the Excalibur N5 for use on ships, but the test – which took place last September at Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona – was a key step forward for the program, said John Hobday, head of Coyote & Rapid Development Programs for Raytheon, in a briefing at Navy League's Sea-Air-Space symposium on May 6.

The Excalibur N5 is based on the M982 Excalibur used by the Army, and it would use the same key parts. It is GPS guided, and Raytheon says it has double the current Mk 45 range (26 nautical miles versus 13).

The N5 reuses the guidance and fusing components from the Block 1B version of the Excalibur.

The Navy is "evaluating where they stand on it," and Raytheon has provided the Navy with all the necessary information, Hobday said.

The test involved six shots and the accuracy of the rounds and handling were evaluated.

“Excalibur N5 answers the Navy’s need for a sea-launched, precision-guided projectile,” said Sam Deneke, Raytheon Land Warfare Systems vice president, in a statement. “N5 doubles the range of the Navy’s big guns and delivers the same accuracy as the land-based version.”

Coast Guard Foreign Military Sales Boosting Standing With Partner Nations

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Coast Guard’s foreign military sales program is fostering good relations with partner nations, increasing maritime governance and saving money, according to the program’s director, Tod Reinert.

Speaking before a show floor audience on May 6 during Sea-Air-Space 2019 at National Harbor, Maryland, Reinert also described how foreign sales of aging Coast Guard vessels is keeping U.S. vendors busy with replenishment and refurbishment contracts – all necessary to ensure that the new owners have hale platforms with which to pursue their missions.

The foreign military sales program is “extending production lines, sharing overhead costs and [sustaining] a robust vendor base,” Reinert said.

The Coast Guard has delivered more than 540 “assets,” worth more than \$1 billion, to 75 partner nations during the past 20 years. The list of benefactors is long. Bangladesh,

Vietnam, Yemen and Saudi Arabia got response boats. The Philippines received riverine boats, and Tunisia got near-shore patrol boats. U.S. Central Command stands to take possession of retired medium-response boats as well.

Recipient nations stand to take ownership of decommissioned high-endurance cutters, Island-class patrol boats, medium-endurance cutters and patrol boats – in a time frame generally beginning sometime next year and spanning into 2024, Reinert said.

These countries must rely upon their acquisitions to conduct search-and-rescue, maritime safety, law enforcement and national defense missions akin to those the Coast Guard performs every day – the cornerstones of its mission to protect the nation's 95,000 nautical miles of coastline, Reinert said.