

Navy Terminates Section 106 Consultation for Increased Growler Operations at Whidbey Island

NORFOLK, Va. – After being unable to reach agreement through extensive, in-depth consultations, the Navy has decided to terminate consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) regarding a planned increased EA-18G Growler operations at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, Washington, the commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said in a Nov. 30 release.

Termination of consultation is an option provided to the federal agency under the Section 106 process, when the agency and consulting parties are unable to reach agreement on how to resolve adverse effects.

Since October 2014, the Navy has consulted with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), Washington State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and local consulting parties to evaluate potential effects to historic properties resulting from the proposed increase in EA-18G Growler airfield operations at the NAS Whidbey Island Complex. The Navy distributed its determination of adverse effect on June 25 and received concurrence from the SHPO on June 27.

The Navy's determination is that indirect adverse effects to the Central Whidbey Island Historic District would result from more frequent aircraft operations. Specifically, the preferred alternative would affect the historic integrity of five landscape viewpoints within the historic district. Subsequently, the Navy initiated a series of meetings and calls with all consulting parties with the intention to reach

agreement on appropriate measures to resolve the effects.

In making this decision to terminate the Section 106 consultation, the Navy has considered all measures put forth by the consulting parties and carefully evaluated the nature, scale and scope of adverse effects on the landscape viewpoints in historic district.

Since August, the Navy conducted a series of meetings with the consulting parties in this resolution phase of the Section 106 process to address ways to resolve the adverse effect on five landscape viewpoints in the historic district. Considerable time has been spent in discussions with the SHPO, consulting parties and ACHP staff working to explain the undertaking, the Section 106 process, and to evaluate and take into consideration resolution options put forth by the Washington SHPO and all consulting parties and the public.

After careful consideration, the Navy has determined that further consultation under Section 106 will not be productive within the time available to avoid unacceptable impacts to the Navy's defense mission. This impasse results from an unwillingness to separate concerns about historic properties from concerns about other economic and community apprehensions surrounding increased Growler flights. The 106 process is about historic preservation and does not address other possible impacts to the community.

The Navy remains committed to resolving the undertaking's adverse effects to historic properties. The Navy will continue discussions with community leaders regarding other potential mitigations that should be addressed outside of the NHPA Section 106 process. The Navy has a long collaborative relationship with the local community on mutual concerns and looks forward to continuing that relationship.

Coast Guard Icebreaker Returns Home Following 129-Day Arctic Deployment

SEATTLE – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy returned home Nov. 30e following a four-month deployment in the Arctic, the Coast Guard Pacific Area in a release.

In addition to providing presence and access in the Arctic during the 129-day summer deployment, the Healy crew completed three research missions in partnership with the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Office of Naval Research, conducting physical and biological research in the Arctic Ocean.

The crew's first mission was a NOAA-sponsored project aimed at furthering the understanding of the changing biological picture in the Arctic, along with studying the physical oceanography and offshore ocean currents in both the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The findings from this mission will aid scientists in studying the biological conditions in the Polar region.

The second mission, supported by the Office of Naval Research, is part of a larger, multiyear Arctic study program. This mission focused on studying the effects of water inflow and surface force changes on ocean stratification and sea ice in the Beaufort Sea. In completing this mission, the Healy crew deployed specialized instruments on ice floes and placed subsurface moorings on the seafloor, which will remain in the Arctic until next year.

Healy's final mission, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, was aimed at understanding the effects of the Pacific and Atlantic water-inflow and the associated boundary current in the Arctic ecosystem. As part of a multi-year endeavor, this study captures measurements from subsurface moorings deployed on the Barrow Canyon Slope as well as data collected from Healy's onboard scientific equipment.

Under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Greg Tlapa, Healy is the nation's premiere high-latitude research vessel and is the only U.S. military surface vessel that deploys to and is capable of operating in the ice-covered waters of the Arctic. In addition to science operations, Healy is capable of conducting a range of Coast Guard operations such as search and rescue, ship escorts, environmental protection and the enforcement of laws and treaties in the Polar regions. Healy provides access and presence throughout the Arctic region to protect U.S. maritime borders and to safeguard the maritime economy.

At 420 feet long, with a displacement of over 16,000 tons and a permanent crew of 87, Healy is the largest ship in the U.S. Coast Guard. Commissioned in 2000, Healy is one of two active icebreakers in the U.S. fleet; the other is the Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star, the service's only heavy icebreaker, homeported in Seattle. Commissioned in 1976, the Polar Star recently departed for a four-month Antarctic deployment to support Operation Deep Freeze 2019.

Operation Deep Freeze is the logistical support provided by the U.S. armed forces to the U.S. Antarctic Program. During Operation Deep Freeze the Polar Star carves a navigable path through seasonal and multiyear ice, sometimes as much as 10-foot thick, for supply ships to deliver annual operating supplies and fuel to National Science Foundation research stations in Antarctica.

The 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 in order to ensure continued national presence and access to the Polar Regions.

Marine Corps Releases Solicitation for New Lightweight Hard Armor Plate

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – The Marine Corps has released a request for proposal for a lightweight hard armor plate to lighten the load for Marines and allow commanders to adapt to the environment, mission and level of threat on the battlefield.

In August, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) assessed industry's capability to make a plate that would supplement the Enhanced Small Arms Protective Insert, or ESAPI plates, and provide sufficient protection for the majority of combat environments. MCSC's Program Manager Infantry Combat Equipment (PM ICE) held Industry Days on Oct. 17-18 and met with 12 companies to receive feedback on the draft solicitation documents.

Now MCSC is seeking proposals from industry for procurement of a maximum of 680,706 and a minimum of 60,000 lightweight plates. The lighter plates will give commanders more options to tailor Marines' ballistic protection to the environment, mission and threat.

"These new plates will be fielded in addition to the existing ESAPI plates," said Nick Pierce, Individual Armor Team lead in

MCSC's PM ICE. "We expect the plates to be at least 38 percent lighter than the ESAPI which will significantly increase the mobility of Marines on the battlefield."

All proposals are due in March, and a contract is expected to be awarded in July. Priorities have not yet been set, but initial fielding would likely go to combat units and could take place as early as fiscal 2020.

"This along with other recent initiatives such as the Plate Carrier Gen III are part of a holistic effort to modernize the personal protective equipment set to give Marines better, lighter, more effective gear," said Pierce.

USS Detroit Begins Operational Testing of LCS Surface-to-Surface Missile Module

NORFOLK, Va. – USS Detroit (LCS 7) began initial operational test and evaluation (IOT&E) of the Surface-to-Surface Missile Module (SSMM) Nov. 17, two months ahead of schedule, Naval Sea Systems Command reported in a Nov. 30 release.

The SSMM is the newest addition to the littoral combat ship Surface Warfare Mission Package, designed to counter potential swarms of attacking armed small craft. The Navy's Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants accelerated the package's operational testing following successful developmental and integrated testing off the coast of Virginia from July through November.

The test and evaluation plan involves two fast inshore attack craft raid events that utilize the SSMM and Gun Mission Module (GMM), consisting of two 30 mm guns, and 57 mm weapons systems. IOT&E completion is planned for early 2019.

The test and evaluation regime is the next step toward declaring initial operational capability (IOC) and fielding the SSMM with the Surface Warfare Mission Package. Included in the SSMM, are 24 Longbow Hellfire missiles; Gun Mission Module, Maritime Security Module, containing two 11-meter rigid-hull inflatable boats; and the Aviation Mission Module, including an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and a Vertical Take-Off Unmanned Air Vehicle. It was designed to complement the ship's organic weaponry to counter small-boat swarming threats and provide a visit, board, search and seizure capability.

The Gun Mission Module, Maritime Security Module and Aviation Mission Module all achieved IOC in November 2014 and have embarked on multiple deployments on both Freedom and Independence LCS variants, providing much-needed visit, board, search and seizure and small boat defense capabilities in the dynamic and congested sea lanes, straits and archipelagos of South and Southeast Asia.

Forty GE LM2500 Marine Gas Turbines to Power 10 DDG 51 Destroyers

EVENDALE, Ohio – GE's Marine Solutions announced in a Nov. 29 release that 40 LM2500 marine gas turbines will power the U.S. Navy's next-generation of DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. The Navy awarded firm construction contracts to

Huntington Ingalls Industries (six ships) and Bath Iron Works (four ships) with options for additional ships.

Each of the DDG 51 destroyers feature four LM2500 engines that will be made at GE's facility in Evendale. GE has already provided more than 300 LM2500 gas turbines for the U.S. Navy's existing fleet of Arleigh Burke destroyers. The LM2500 gas turbine modules will use GE's lightweight composite that offers significant performance advantages over a steel design in terms of weight, noise, access and life-cycle costs.

"GE continues to identify and invest in new technologies that keep our gas turbines nimble and ready to meet the ever-changing needs of the U.S. Navy, our largest marine gas turbine customer," said Brien Bolsinger, vice president and general manager, GE's Marine Solutions. "GE proudly manufactures these engines in Ohio that help safeguard our country at home and abroad."

GE has delivered gas turbines onboard 646 naval ships serving 35 navies worldwide. GE has provided 97 percent of the commissioned propulsion gas turbines in the U.S. Navy fleet. With a GE gas turbine, the U.S. Navy has support worldwide whether onshore or at sea, and interoperability benefits with other U.S. and allied naval ships.

Volvo Penta to Supply Engines for Next-Generation RIBs for Coast Guard Cutters

CHESAPEAKE, Va. – Volvo Penta of the Americas has been selected to supply the engines, drives and controls for the

new U.S. Coast Guard cutter boat large (CBL) rigid-hull inflatable boats (RIBs), which are being built at Metal Craft Marine.

The boats will be powered by Volvo Penta three-liter 220 hp diesel Aquamatic sterndrive systems with HD controls.

The Coast Guard awarded a five-year indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract to Metal Craft to build and deliver a minimum of 46 new 7-meter RIBs with deliveries to begin in 2019. They will be constructed at Metal Craft's shipyard in Cape Vincent, New York.

The RIBs are designed for a top speed of 35-plus knots carrying up to 13 passengers with an operating range of 200 nautical miles in up to 4-meter wave heights. They will be carried on three different classes of U.S. Coast Guard cutters.

"The Volvo Penta diesel sterndrives are the perfect propulsion package for these rugged workhorse RIBs," said Bob Clark, contracts manager at Metal Craft Marine. "They have an unsurpassed reputation for dependable performance under the most difficult conditions, and Volvo Penta's extensive global service network ensures rapid availability of spare parts and technical support will ensure maximum uptime for these critical shipboard assets."

"We will work closely with the Metal Craft shipyard team to provide smooth and seamless installation and validation of the propulsion system on each boat to ensure the boats are delivered on time," said Jens Bering, vice president of marine sales at Volvo Penta of the Americas.

Canadian Surface Combatant Contract Award on Hold Pending Challenge

VICTORIA, British Columbia – A legal challenge by a U.S. defense firm has resulted in a near unprecedented order for the Canadian government to put on hold awarding a contract to Lockheed Martin for a new fleet of warships that are to form the backbone of the future Canadian Navy.

The Canadian International Trade Tribunal issued the order Nov. 27 on the 60 billion Canadian dollar (\$45.2 billion) Canadian Surface Combatant project after Alion Science of McLean, Virginia, complained the ship being proposed by Lockheed Martin Canada did not meet the Royal Canadian Navy requirements.

Lockheed Martin Canada, which offered the BAE Type 26 warship, was named by the Canadian government as the “preferred bidder” on the surface combatant program on Oct. 19. Negotiations were underway with Canadian government officials to sign a contract in early 2019.

In response, Alion went to Federal Court of Canada on Nov. 16 to request a judicial review of the decision to name Lockheed Martin the top bidder. On Nov. 21, it went to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal with its complaint that the Type 26 is not only unproven but does not meet the government’s stated requirements in the area of speed. The details about surface combatant speed requirements were removed from the complaint because of national security reasons.

Alion’s request for a judicial review could take some time. The company’s position, however, received a boost when the Canadian International Trade Tribunal issued an order to put a halt to any awarding of a contract to Lockheed Martin until

the tribunal could examine the validity of Alion's complaint. Canadian defense industry sources told Seapower that firms often ask the tribunal to put a defense contract on hold but it is rarely done, if ever.

Rania Haddad, a spokeswoman for Public Services and Procurement Canada, the federal department overseeing the surface combatant program, declined to comment.

"As this matter is the subject of a complaint which has just been accepted for inquiry by the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and is also the subject of litigation in the Federal Court, comments cannot be provided at this time," she said Nov. 28.

Cindy Tessier, a spokeswoman for Lockheed Martin Canada, said the firm is not commenting as the case is before the courts.

The Canadian Surface Combatant project is the largest procurement in Canadian history.

A Department of National Defence source said work on the surface combatant project is on hold for now until it can be determined whether the Canadian government will go to court to challenge the tribunal's order. That decision is expected in a week or so.

Alion has offered Canada the Dutch De Zeven Provinciën Air Defense and Command frigate, which the firm said meets all of Canada's requirements.

The Canadian Surface Combatants will be constructed at Irving Shipbuilding in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Type 26 is currently under construction for the U.K. Royal Navy and in late June Australia's government selected the Type 26 design as its future frigate for the country's navy.

The Canadian government has committed to building 15 surface combatants.

“This is probably the largest and most complex procurement in the history of Canada,” André Fillion, an assistant deputy minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada, told Seapower in October.

The new ships will replace the existing Halifax-class frigates and form the backbone of the Royal Canadian Navy for the next generation.

The Canadian government had expected to sign a contract with Lockheed Martin Canada sometime between January and March. If those negotiations fail, the government will go to its next highest-rated bidder on the program. That could be Alion or Navantia of Spain, whose proposal is based on the F-105 frigate design, a ship in service with the Spanish navy. Neither firm knows whether it has the second highest-ranking design.

Coast Guard Repatriates 11 Migrants to Cuba

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter Isaac Mayo crew repatriated 11 Cuban migrants Nov. 29 to Cuba, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

A good Samaritan located a rustic vessel approximately 18 miles southeast of Islamorada on Nov. 26. A Coast Guard Station Islamorada 33-foot Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement interdicted the migrants and transferred them to the Coast Guard Cutter Charles David Jr. when it arrived on scene.

“The Coast Guard bears the responsibility of enforcing

immigration laws with our partners and securing the maritime domain, while also ensuring the safety of life at sea,” said Lt. j.g. Vladimir Domanskiy, executive officer of Isaac Mayo. “The rustic vessels we interdict are often overloaded, manifestly unsafe and the people aboard may have been at sea for days without proper food, water or medical attention. The individuals repatriated were stranded at sea for more than a week and the crews of the cutters Charles David, Jr. and Isaac Mayo ensured they were cared for and treated with the utmost respect following their rescue.”

Once aboard Coast Guard cutters, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and medical attention.

Approximately 137 Cuban migrants have attempted to illegally enter the U.S. via the maritime environment since fiscal 2019 began on Oct. 1, compared to 384 Cuban migrants in fiscal 2018. These numbers represent the total number of at-sea interdictions, landings and disruptions in the Florida Straits, the Caribbean and Atlantic.

The cutters Charles David Jr. and Isaac Mayo are 154-foot Sentinel-class cutters homeported in Key West, Florida.

First Heliborne A0EW Pod for Navy Expected in Late 2019

WASHINGTON – Lockheed Martin expects to produce the first engineering development model (EDM) of a heliborne electronic warfare pod by late 2019, a company official said.

Orders for materials for the ALQ-218 Advanced Offboard Electronic Warfare (A0EW) pods began last month, Joe

Ottaviano, director of electronic warfare programs at Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems, told reporters Nov. 28 at the Association of Old Crows convention.

The AOEW pod is designed to be taken aloft by an MH-60R or MH-60S Seahawk helicopter and serve as an offboard electronic attack system to counter anti-ship cruise missiles. The helicopter provides power and mobility for the pod, but the pod's operation is independent of the helicopter crew and linked to the SLQ-32(V)6/7 shipboard electronic warfare system.

"It's bringing capability that hasn't been brought before," Ottaviano said, who noted that testing will be a challenge because of the novelty of the capability. "It is designed to be autonomous or [alternatively] work with the fleet."

He said Lockheed Martin expects to roll out the first AOEW EDM in late 2019. The system completed its critical design review in June. The company has been awarded a contract for six EDMs. Initial operational capability is planned for the 2020. Additional pods are expected to be ordered in a low-rate initial production order in the 2021-2022 time frame.

The pod has successfully completed a fit check on the MH-60 helicopter and can be attached to either side of the helicopter.

"How to get all of this capability in a very small pod was a challenge," Ottaviano said, noting that the pod "generates a lot of heat" and has no supplementary cooling system.

Virtual Training Means Less Danger for Carrier Flight Deck Crews

ARLINGTON, Va. – One of the most dangerous environments in the U.S. Navy is the deck of an aircraft carrier. Catapult systems that can remove limbs, furious engines, whipping propellers and high winds create a hectic environment.

The driving force behind all of these activities is helping a pilot land an aircraft on a short slab of pitching steel, in the middle of the ocean.

Although pilots are the stars of the show, they could not accomplish their missions without the support of flight deck crews, who are responsible for safely launching and recovering aircraft.

Previously, flight deck crews could only conduct training while on the job. But thanks to a collaborative effort between the Office of Naval Research Global (ONR Global) TechSolutions program and the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD), a new technology called Flight Deck Crew Refresher Training Expansion Packs (TEPs) will deliver cutting-edge training to Sailors and Marines.

The system is an expandable framework of game-based immersive 3D technologies that allows for individual, team or multi-team training events.

“Having a simulator that allows us to tie the full flight deck team with all the key decision-makers, supervisors, catapult crew and watch stations together – and train in a virtual environment – is just fantastic,” said Cmdr. Mehdi Akacem, air boss aboard the Navy’s newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford.

The first three TEPs will help a carrier's Primary Flight Control team; the Landing Signal Officer (LSO) team; and the Catapult Launch Team.

The idea for the Flight Deck Crew Refresher Training came from an LSO instructor at Naval Air Station Oceana. TechSolutions – ONR Global's rapid-response science and technology program that develops prototype technologies to address problems voiced by Sailors and Marines, usually within 12 months – listened to the idea and found the right people to make it happen.

Courtney McNamara, a computer scientist and the Advanced Gaming Interactive Learning Environment Team Lead at NAWCTSD, helped develop the technology.

"All of the ship systems, characters, flight deck crew characters and team members can be both driven synthetically or by live players," said McNamara.

The training stations simulate real-life with the aid of virtual environments. Even the flight patterns that occur during the simulations are based on real flight patterns conducted by pilots.

The training can simulate normal operations and emergency conditions, exposing deck crews to a wide array of real-world scenarios.

"This is really the first example I've seen of extending the value of a simulation environment to such an essential, tangible thing as a carrier flight deck," said Akacem. "It's really a need we've had for years, one we've been able to get by without because of the grit and will of our Sailors and Marines."