

Navy to Christen Expeditionary Fast Transport Puerto Rico

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen its newest Expeditionary Fast Transport, the future USNS Puerto Rico (T-EPF 11), during a ceremony Nov. 10 at the Austal USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama, the Defense Department said in a release.

The principal speaker is congresswoman Jenniffer González-Colón, resident commissioner of Puerto Rico. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor will serve as the ship's sponsor. In a time-honored Navy tradition, she will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

“This ship honors the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the contributions Puerto Ricans have made to our nation and Navy and Marine Corps team,” said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer. “USNS Puerto Rico will provide our commanders high-speed sealift mobility and agility and I am thankful for this ship, her crew, and our industrial force teammates whose service makes this great ship possible.”

The future USNS Puerto Rico will be the first active ship in naval service to honor the island in the West Indies east of Hispaniola. An Alaska-class cruiser named Puerto Rico was authorized July 19, 1940, but construction was canceled June 24, 1943.

With an all-aluminum shallow-draft hull, the EPF is a commercial-based catamaran capable of intra-theater personnel and cargo lift providing combatant commanders high-speed sealift mobility with inherent cargo handling capability and agility to achieve positional advantage over operational distances.

EPF-class ships are designed to transport 600 short tons of military cargo 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. The ship is capable of operating in shallow-draft ports and waterways, interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, and on/off-loading a combat-loaded Abrams main battle tank (M1A2).

The EPF includes a flight deck for helicopter operations and an off-load ramp that will allow vehicles to quickly drive off the ship. EPF's shallow draft (under 15 feet) further enhances littoral operations and port access.

The EPF program delivered its ninth ship late last year, USNS City of Bismarck (T-EPF 9), with delivery of USNS Burlington (EPF 10) planned for mid-November. Puerto Rico and Newport (EPF 12) are currently under construction at Austal's shipyard.

Navy Submarine Warfare Director: Navy to Keep Columbia SSBN Line 'Hot' After 12th Boat

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy plans to keep the production line of the Columbia-class nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) ready for new submarine production, the Navy's director for submarine warfare said.

"What we are going to do is we're going to keep the Columbia line hot," Rear Adm. John Tammen, said Nov. 8 at the Naval Submarine League's annual symposium. "That gives us the

option, if STRATCOM [U.S. Strategic Command] says we need more than 12, well then we can produce more than 12.”

Keeping the line open also may aid in a smoother transition to the Navy’s next submarines, possibly large mother ships for unmanned underwater vehicles and other types mission systems.

“If STRATCOM doesn’t need more than 12, then we’re looking at what we call the Large-Volume Host Platform, where we’ll take that center section – we haven’t nailed down the concept – but there will be the ability to host vehicles on board inside that center section,” Tammen said.

Also speaking at the symposium, Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe, director of Strategic Systems Programs, noted that the Defense Department’s Nuclear Posture Review calls for a minimum of 12 Columbia-class SSBNs, not a hard limitation of 12 boats.

The design of the lead boat of the new class, Columbia, is 83 percent complete. Construction is scheduled to begin next year. The boat is scheduled for its first patrol in 2031.

Next Sub-Launched Ballistic Missile ‘Won’t Be Completely New’

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy’s next-generation submarine-launched missile (SLBM) will not be a completely new design but will incorporate some of the current Trident D5 Life-Extension (D5LE) version systems.

The follow-on missile is currently known as the Trident D5LE2, according to Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe, director of Strategic

Systems Programs (SSP).

“What Ohio [-class SSBN] has today [D5LE] is what Columbia will initially have until we get the Life-Extension 2,” Wolfe said Nov. 8 at the Naval Submarine League’s annual symposium.

To lower technical and schedule risk in the Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine program, the Navy decided to arm the boats initially with the existing Trident D5LE missile rather than develop an entirely new missile concurrent with the development of the submarine. At some point in the service life of the Columbia class, the boats will receive the D5LE2.

Wolfe said the SSP will begin trade studies in 2020 to “define an SLBM that can deploy throughout the life of Columbia,” which is slated to serve to 2084. The studies will determine which D5LE components can be continued in the next missile and which will need to be modernized or replaced for D5LE2.

The D5LE2 “won’t look like the D5 that we’ve got today, it won’t be completely new, it will be somewhere in the middle,” he said.

“If you look at the decisions that we made on Columbia, as we went down to 16 [launch] tubes [from 24 on the Ohio class], part of that decision was made because there was an assumption that the reliability of this weapon system way out in the 2070s and 2080s will be just as reliable and supportable as it is today with the current Trident,” he said.

Wolfe pointed out that the Trident missile inventory will decline to a point where new production will be needed. Part of the challenge is to sustain the industrial base to build, for example, rocket motors, so that the expertise is not lost during procurement troughs and would not have to be reconstituted.

“Our challenge is that whatever we do next has, at a minimum, the reliability, accuracy and supportability that we’ve got

today," he said.

Sparton, Leidos Team on Mk5 Acoustic Device Countermeasure

DELEON SPRINGS, Fla. – Sparton Corp. has teamed with Leidos Maritime Systems to support the Acoustic Device Countermeasure (ADC) Mk5 program, Sparton said in a Nov. 6 release.

The Mk5 is a next-generation countermeasure intended to replace the ADC Mk3. The ADC Mk5 is a 3-inch diameter expendable device that is submarine launched from internal signal ejectors and is part of a submarine's defense against acoustic-homing torpedoes.

On Sept. 13, the U.S. Navy announced Leidos had been awarded the contract (valued up to \$36.1 million) under a competitive solicitation. Sparton will contribute to the contract's scope of work, which includes the design, development, fabrication, integration, testing and low-rate initial production of the U.S. Navy's Mk5 program. Sparton will also provide manufacturing services to support system fabrication.

"Sparton is excited to leverage our knowledge of maritime acoustic communication systems, packaging, and deployment systems for this new opportunity", said Jim Lackemacher, group vice president of the Engineered Components & Products Segment. "Sparton looks forward to collaborating with Leidos to bring this vital capability to the fleet."

Coast Guard Returns 71 Migrants to the Dominican Republic Following At-Sea Interdictions

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard returned 71 of 81 interdicted migrants to law enforcement authorities in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, over the weekend following multiple at-sea interdictions off Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the 7th District Coast Guard said in a Nov. 6 release.

Ten other migrants interdicted are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico for attempting to illegally re-enter a U.S. territory.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group.

“Each vessel was grossly overloaded, which created an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation for the people aboard,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, chief of response for Coast Guard Sector San Juan. “The great coordination between the Coast Guard and our interagency partners prevented significant loss of life at sea.

“The Coast Guard and our local partners maintain a robust patrol presence in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean with both air and surface assets, and any migrant interdicted at sea regardless of nationality will be repatriated back to their country of origin,” he said.

During patrols from Oct. 31 through Nov. 2, aircrews with a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry maritime patrol aircraft detected three grossly overloaded, makeshift boats in international waters traveling illegally toward Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon crew interdicted and safely embarked 16 migrants from one vessel on Oct. 31; 53 migrants from a second vessel on Nov. 1 with the help of Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations-Caribbean Air and Marine Branch crews; and 12 migrants from a third vessel on Nov. 2.

Dixon and Coast Guard Cutter Decisive returned the 71 migrants to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The 10 migrants facing prosecution were transferred to the custody of Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Puerto Rico.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

Decisive is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida, while Richard Dixon is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.

Navy League Awards Meritorious Citation to Dr. J. Phillip London

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Navy League headquarters presented Dr. J. Phillip “Jack” London, executive chairman and chairman of the board of CACI International with its Meritorious Citation, the highest honor the Navy League bestows upon an individual or an organization.

“Dr. London has shown phenomenal leadership and character throughout his military service and his successful career,” said Navy League National President Alan Kaplan at the Nov. 3 presentation during an award dinner at the annual board of directors meeting. “He has left an indelible mark on the Navy League of the United States through the guidance and support he has bestowed upon me and the national presidents that have come before me.”

London has been a staunch supporter of the Navy League throughout his career. His long relationship with the Navy League has included ship commissioning ceremonies, numerous Navy anniversary celebrations including the War of 1812 Bicentennial, Sea-Air-Space expositions, service on Navy League national committees, and as a supporter and adviser to Navy League national presidents – the highest-ranking position in the organization.

“Receiving the highest award and recognition bestowed by on an individual by the Navy League is an honor I will always cherish,” London said to an audience of Navy League members, special guests and military service members at the Crowne Plaza Old Town. “Being recognized in this company is an honor onto itself.”

“Jack has lived a life of true character, a life that has impacted generations of Sailors and Marines and anyone who thinks that service to our country is important,” said Adm. William Moran, keynote speaker for the night’s event.

Moran thanked the Navy League members in attendance for the impact the organization has on service members.

“It’s your impact, members of this group of patriots, that inspire the rest of us who are serving and those still to come,” he said. “It’s why it’s so important the Navy League thrives for years to come.”

Moran highlighted London’s 1959 graduation from the U.S. Naval

Academy. London then served active duty in the U.S. Navy from 1959 to 1971. From 1961 to 1965, he served as a Navy carrier anti-submarine warfare helicopter pilot, positioned against the Soviet submarine nuclear missile threat. He saw duty in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

While in the Naval Reserve from 1971 to 1983, Capt. London served as an aeronautical engineering duty officer and was commanding officer of the Naval Air Systems Command Reserve engineering unit.

London has previously received the Navy League Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Award in 2007 and the New York City Navy League's council's Leadership Technology Award in 2016.

AeroVironment Awarded Puma AE UAS Contract for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Ally

MONROVIA, Calif. –AeroVironment Inc. has received a \$3.2 million firm-fixed-price contract from the U.S. Department of Defense to provide RQ-20B Puma AE II small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), training and support to an allied nation in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility, the company announced in a Nov. 6 release. Delivery is anticipated by March 30.

“The vast, diverse landscape of the INDOPACOM area of operation demands small unmanned aircraft systems that can support ground, riverine and maritime operations effectively,” said Kirk Flittie, vice president and general manager of AeroVironment’s Unmanned Aircraft Systems business. “The

combat-proven Puma has demonstrated its unique effectiveness in a wide range of operating environments, from mountains to deserts, from the Arctic to Antarctica, on land and on the open ocean, delivering actionable intelligence to help customers proceed with certainty.”

AeroVironment’s family of small drones comprise the majority of all unmanned aircraft in the U.S. Department of Defense inventory and its rapidly growing international customer base numbers more than 45 allied governments.

“This contract is a good example of the additional procurement potential among our international customers,” Flittie said.

The AeroVironment Puma is designed for land-based and maritime operations. Capable of landing in water or on the ground, the all-environment Puma, with its Mantis i45 sensor suite, empowers the operator with extended flight time and a level of imaging capability never before available in the small UAS class.

Navy EP-3 Intercepted Over the Black Sea

NAPLES, Italy – A U.S. EP-3 Aries aircraft flying in international airspace over the Black Sea was intercepted by a Russian SU-27 on Nov. 5, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

“This interaction was determined to be unsafe due to the SU-27 conducting a high-speed pass directly in front of the mission aircraft, which put our pilots and crew at risk,” the release said. “The intercepting SU-27 made an additional pass, closing

with the EP-3 and applying its afterburner while conducting a banking turn away. The crew of the EP-3 reported turbulence following the first interaction, and vibrations from the second. The duration of the intercept was approximately 25 minutes.

“While the Russian military is within its right to exercise within international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible. We expect them to behave within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents, including the 1972 Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas (INCSEA). Unsafe actions increase the risk of miscalculation and potential for midair collisions.

“The U.S. aircraft was operating in accordance with international law and did not provoke this Russian activity.”

Sikorsky Awarded Contract to Sustain Navy, Marine Super Stallion, Sea Dragon Helicopters

STRATFORD, Conn. – Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, was awarded a performance-based logistics contract with a value of \$717 million to provide supply and logistics support to the entire fleet of in-service CH-53E Super Stallions and MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters, the company said in a Nov. 5 release.

The H-53E is a battle-proven heavy-lift helicopter continuing to support the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy in missions at home

and around the world.

The scope of the contract includes repairs, overhauls, spares, obsolescence mitigation and asset management services over four years. Contract performance is based on material availability metrics with additional incentives added for demand reductions, maintainability enhancements and aircraft readiness contributions.

The expanded comprehensive arrangement will cover additional readiness-critical components, including main and tail rotor blades, main gearbox, main rotor head and flight control components, as well as accessories such as refueling probe and cargo system components.

“We expect the expanded performance-based logistics to measurably improve material availability and reduce support cost while increasing overall aircraft readiness,” said Pierre Garant, Sikorsky senior program manager, Marine Corps In-Service Programs. “Our support infrastructure and past performance-based logistics successes will result in Sikorsky continuing to reliably provide mission support critical to the warfighter.”

As the Marine Corps’ heavy lift-helicopter designed for the transportation of heavy material and supplies, the CH-53E Super Stallion is compatible with most amphibious class ships. With four-and-one-half hours’ endurance, the helicopter can move heavy equipment over rugged terrain in bad weather and at night. The MH-53E Sea Dragon fills the Navy’s need for long-range minesweeping missions, in addition to heavy-lift duties. The H-53E has consistently proven its worth to the fleet commanders with its versatility and range.

The contract will provide the vital and affordable support to the entire fleet – expanding a reliable base of long-term sustainment as the aircraft continue to fully operate until the introduction of the replacement aircraft, the Sikorsky

Vigilant Returns Home Following 63-Day Caribbean Patrol

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant returned home Nov. 6 to Cape Canaveral following a 63-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Vigilant concluded the patrol in which the crew conducted numerous at-sea vessel boardings to ensure the safety of life at sea and enforce U.S. federal laws. The crew also worked with partner nations to enhance national security and stability throughout the Caribbean basin.

During the crew's two months at sea, they detected and interdicted two drug trafficking vessels, detained seven smugglers, and seized over \$700,000 worth of narcotics. The Vigilant crew worked closely with representatives from the Bahamas and Haiti to effect prosecution of the suspected criminals.

The Vigilant crew also saved the lives of three men who had been lost at sea for over six days. The men's sailboat was caught in a gale, blown over 100 miles from shore, and then becalmed. The survivors had been without water for two days when they were found by the Vigilant crew. After giving them necessary medical attention, the crew returned the survivors safely to their home country.

The Vigilant is a multimission 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include illegal drug and migrant interdiction, as well as search and rescue. The Vigilant patrols throughout the Caribbean basin to ensure safety of life at sea and to enforce international and domestic laws.