

GA-ASI FLIGHT TESTS LEO SATCOM ON MQ-9A



[Release from GA-ASI](#)

Capability Provides Global Coverage That Enables Operations Anywhere in the World

SAN DIEGO – 02 February 2023 – On Dec. 22, 2022, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the Air National Guard (ANG), with joint support from the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) and U.S. Air Force (USAF), flight tested an MQ-9A remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) equipped with a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications (SATCOM) Command and Control system. This groundbreaking capability provides global coverage and connectivity that will enable pole-to-pole operations for GA-ASI's family of RPA – including models such as the MQ-9B SkyGuardian®/SeaGuardian®, MQ-9A Reaper, and Gray Eagle 25M.

"This is truly game-changing for our platforms," said GA-ASI

President David R. Alexander. "Using LEO SATCOM not only keeps GA-ASI aircraft connected from the North Pole to the South Pole to allow operations in the most austere environments, but it will also provide resilient connectivity that allows operators to pass much more data to and from the aircraft."

Early testing indicates LEO SATCOM significantly reduces latency and can be used in all phases of flight. For customers across the MQ-9 family of systems, LEO SATCOM should decrease operational costs, and the smaller hardware footprint will ultimately increase flexibility and reduce future payload integration costs.

The MQ-9A flight test was based out of GA-ASI's Gray Butte Flight Operations Facility near Palmdale, Calif., and followed several weeks of ground testing.

TE 2030 to Develop 'More Offensively Minded' Marine Infantry



ARLINGTON, Va. – Marine infantry force-wide will be firing at moving robotic targets, not just static paper targets, as the Marine Corps continues integration of the new Advanced Rifle Qualification (ARQ) course to meet the requirements of warfighting in the future, the Corps said.

“We have in our mind how we’re going to build [Marines] to be cognitive warfighting thinkers for the future,” said Lt. Gen. Kevin M. Iiams, commanding general of Training and Education Command, discussing with reporters Jan. 24 about the upcoming rollout of the Marine Corps’ Training and Education 2030 (TE 2030) concept, launching a series of initiatives in concert with Force Design 2030, the concept initiated three years ago by the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. David H. Berger. These initiatives are designed to lay the foundation for future training and education of Marines and assigned Sailors for warfighting in the future.

“We’re getting away from where we were previously in the

Marine Corps where we were about rote, repetitive training. We want cognitive, problem-solving thinkers for the future," Iiams said. "It is more offensively minded. It's combat related. It's positional shooting. Its teaching how they're actually going to employ their weapons in combat instead of just marksmanship."

In the more challenging and rigorous ARQ, Marine infantry in a combat scenario will start firing at the 500-meter line instead of the 200-meter line.

Advanced Simulation

Iiams said the Corps will introduce advanced simulation capability "to be able to train them to higher levels, to be able to use some of the robot targets that we're putting out there, to give them more realistic training scenarios in the field, not just shooting paper static targets but actually 3-dimensional roaming targets throughout the battlefield, which create a completely different scenario for them and cause them to figure out, are they going to shoot or not shoot as they move through some of these regimes."

"One of the systems currently being fielded is the Trackless Mobile Infantry Target (TMIT). TMITs are 3-dimensional, free-roaming, variable speed / variable acceleration moving targets with 360 degrees of untethered mobility that maneuver with teleoperation and semi-autonomous control," the TE 2030 document said. "They provide a dynamic and realistic representation of human targets in both live-fire and non-live fire training environments."

The pilot ARQ course has been completed and the course is being implemented Corps-wide, progressing toward full operational capability.

The Corps also will be developing and incorporating an automatic scoring range to use training time more

efficiently.

Marine Corps reactivates base on Guam



[Release by U.S. Marine Corps](#)

ASAN BEACH, GUAM – The U.S. Marine Corps reactivated a new base on Guam in a ceremony, Jan. 26, honoring the long-shared history of the Marine Corps and Guam and establishing a forward presence in the Indo-Pacific that will endure into the future.

Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Blaz is the first newly constructed Marine Corps base in 70 years and serves as a testament to the U.S.-Japan alliance. Guam was chosen as the location for the new base during the 2012 Bilateral Agreement between the U.S and Japanese governments, under the Defense

Policy Review Initiative, which set the framework for the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam. The base is named in honor of Brigadier General Vicente Tomas "Ben" Garrido Blaz, the first CHamorro Marine to attain the rank of general officer.

"Today is an important day that marks the future of the Marines on Guam, and it is also a day to reflect on the century-long history of the Marine Corps in this beautiful place we call home," said Col. Christopher Bopp, Commanding Officer, MCB Camp Blaz. "On this island Marines and their CHamoru brethren have lived in peace and fought in war together and we are proud to carry on this legacy of honor and courage."

Guam's history is marked by the enduring partnership between the U.S. military and the people of Guam. Since the establishment of Marine Barracks Guam in 1899, the Marine Corps has had a nearly continuous presence on Guam. The Marine Barracks was reactivated after World War II and deactivated November 10, 1992.

During the ceremony at War in the Pacific National Historical Park, honors were rendered to the Honorable Lou Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam; Commandant of the Marine Corps; U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environmental; Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs provided remarks. The ceremony ended with a traditional pass and review.

"I believe that on the horizon lies the opportunities that Ben (Blaz) wished for our people," said the Honorable Leon Guerrero. "No longer are we dealing with challenges and isolation, we are cultivating a more sustainable and comprehensive Indo-Pacific allyship. The future of Guam is inseparable from the future of the broader Indo-Pacific and the success of the Marines is inseparable from the success of

Guam's people. Together we are an island and an ocean united; together we are always better and always stronger; together we are always faithful. Semper Fidelis."

Situated on Guam's northern plateau, Camp Blaz will serve as a strategic hub as the Department of Defense realizes the vision of the 2022 National Defense Strategy. The base construction projects currently underway are partially funded by a large monetary contribution from the Government of Japan.

"Forward, persistent presence is key to the regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz is a critical part of that. More than that, it shows our undivided relationship with the Government of Japan," said the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. David H. Berger.

Camp Blaz represents a significant milestone for the future of both the Marine Corps and Guam. The base's forward presence and engagement in the Pacific will play an essential role in strengthening the ability of the U.S. and its allies and partners for a collective defense and to promote regional security.

"The Japan and U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of the people, the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the linchpin of Japan's foreign policy," said Ms. Yoshikawa Yuumi, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Marine Corps is committed to upholding the legacy of Brig. Gen. Blaz's, prioritizing environmental and cultural stewardship, and building on the established relationships with the people of Guam remains integral in all aspects of development of this installation.

"It is right here, today, that we come together to demonstrate the power of partnership and the importance of community," said the Honorable Mrs. Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment.

For additional information, visit
<https://www.mcbblaz.marines.mil>.

Marine Corps, Navy Cease Administrative Actions to Dismiss COVID Vaccine Refusers



5/12/22: Covid Vaccine – Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark Forrey administers a COVID-19 vaccine to Navy Seaman Micah Dayoub aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, in Yokosuka, Japan, Sept. 9, 2022. The Ronald Reagan, Carrier Strike Group 5's flagship, is the Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier. (Photo By: Navy Seaman Natasha Chevalier Losada)

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have halted administrative actions to discharge Sailors and Marines for refusing mandatory vaccination against the COVID-19 coronavirus variant.

In accordance with updated guidance from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III, “Commanders will immediately discontinue administrative separation processing of Marines solely for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine,” Capt. Ryan Bruce, a Marine Corps spokesperson, told Seapower in a Jan. 20 email.

A [Marine administrative message](#) (MARADMIN) signed Jan. 18 by Lt. Gen. D.J. Furness, the Marine Corps deputy commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations directed commanders to, “immediately suspend any new or ongoing adverse administrative actions associated with declining the COVID-19 vaccine.”

The MARADMIN also instructed commanders to cease any ongoing reviews of requests by current service members for a religious, administrative, or medical exemption, including pending appeals.

Furness’s directive came a week after similar guidance for Navy commanders issued by Vice Adm. Richard J. Cheeseman, Jr., deputy chief of naval operations for Personnel, Manpower, and Training, N1.

Cheeseman told all commands to discontinue administrative separation processing of vaccine-refusing Sailors and, “suspend immediately any new adverse administrative actions associated with refusing the COVID-19 vaccine.”

Thousands of Sailors and Marines have been separated from the sea services for vaccination refusal, following Austin’s Aug. 24, 2021 memo making COVID vaccination mandatory for all active duty and Reserve members of the armed services and the

National Guard.

Austin said the vaccination mandate was necessary to protect the force and maintain readiness. However, language in the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), enacted in late December, [required the defense secretary to rescind the mandate](#), which had sparked complaints from lawmakers and lawsuits from service members.

The legislation stopped short of requiring the Pentagon to reinstate troops who were dismissed for refusing the shot. It also did not mention giving them back pay.

However, on Jan. 17, Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters, “Right now, we are not currently pursuing back-pay to service members who were dismissed for refusing to take the COVID vaccination.”

As of Dec. 20, 2022, the latest [Defense Department COVID-19 statistics](#), almost 2 million service members have been fully vaccinated, including 389,177 in the Navy and 200,186 Marines.

Marine Corps Replacing Fixed-Wing Small UAS with VTOL Types



ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps is divesting some types of its short-range, short-endurance small unmanned aerial systems (SUAS) in favor of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) SUAS.

The Corps has retired its fixed-wing RQ-11B Raven and RQ-12A Wasp IV SUAS in favor of VTOL SUAS that are easier to launch and recover and can provide a hover-and-stare surveillance capability. They are being replaced by VTOL SUAS such as the SkyDio X2D (built by SkyDio), and the R80 SkyRaider (built by FLIR Systems).

“The Marine Corps’ future operating concepts emphasize the need for agile, distributed operations which require small UAS to be organically owned and operated by tactical units for situational awareness, force protection, target engagement, persistent command, control, communications, and electronic warfare,” said Maj. Joshua C. Benson, director of Communication Strategy & Operations for Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration, in response to a query

from Seapower. “These systems equip small unit commanders with these capabilities at the lowest tactical echelons, and the transition to Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) capability enables maneuver units to operate in challenging terrain and austere operational environments, as the systems do not rely on traditional launch and recovery space.”

A Necessary Innovation

Benson said the Corps is procuring the SkyDio X2D as the squad/platoon electro-optical/infrared/full motion video (FMV) sensor. The R80D SkyRaider is being procured to “provide company-level FMV and selectable payload usage for the Ground Combat Element.”

He said the evolution to VTOL SUAS from the successful RQ-11 and RQ-12 is a necessary innovation.

“Rapid technological advancement of uncrewed aerial systems necessitates an iterative approach to research, development, procurement, implementation, and re-evaluation of system capabilities,” he said. “This adaptive approach enables the service to transition to cutting-edge capabilities as industry and academia advance at the speed of innovation. Divestment of legacy systems and incorporation of new technologies is necessary to ensure our warfighters are equipped with the most capable systems and technology, in order to maintain pace with our peer and near peer adversaries.”

The Corps also operates other VTOL SUAS, including the Skyranger (FLIR Systems/Aeryon Labs); Indago 3 (Lockheed Martin); Instant Eye (Physical Sciences Inc.); PD-100 Black Hornet (FLIR Systems); and Scout (MITRE Corp.).

Marine Corps Adds KC-130J Squadron to Support Marine Littoral Regiment



A U.S. Marine Corps KC-130J aircraft assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 prepares to land on Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Jan. 6, 2023. Jan. 6, 2023. VMGR-153 will formally activate as a KC-130 squadron of Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, on Jan. 13, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Chandler Stacy)

ARLINGTON, Va. — A new Marine Corps squadron has been activated in Hawaii to enhance mobility of the Corps' first

Marine littoral regiment. Marine Aerial Refueler/Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153) was activated at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, in a Jan. 13 ceremony. The squadron is equipped with Lockheed Martin KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport aircraft.

The activation of VMGR-153 is one enactment of Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David H. Berger's Force Design 2030 concept, which is re-aligning the Corps to conduct expeditionary advance base operations inside an adversary's weapon engagement zone. The Corps is activating three self-deployable, multi-domain Marine littoral regiments (MLRs) to conduct such operations, the first of which – the 3rd MLR – was activated last March. The 12th MLR will be activated this year in Okinawa, Japan.

VMGR-153 brings to four the number of active-component VMGR squadrons in the Corps, three of which – including the new squadron – are positioned to support Marine Forces Pacific, the other two being VMGR-152, based at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, and VMGR-352, based at MCAS Miramar, California. The fourth squadron, VMGR-252, is based at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina.

Until last month, the Marine Corps Reserve also fielded two KC-130J squadrons. VMGR-452 was de-activated Dec. 2 at Stewart Air National Guard Base in New York. Remaining is VMGR-234 at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas.

Marine Corps Activated Marine

Corps Information Command



Marine Maj. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage, Commander of Marine Forces Cyber, speaks at the uncasing of the flag of the Marine Corps Information Command, in a ceremony held at Ft. George G. Meade on 13 January, 2023. The MCIC is comprised of a Headquarters, the Marine Cryptologic Office, and two Major Subordinate Commands; the Marine Corps Information Operations Center and Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion.

[Release from U.S. Marine Corps](#)

FORT MEADE, Md. – The U.S. States Marine Corps continues operationalizing the Marine Corps' seventh warfighting function, information, by activating a service retained, two-star command poised to synchronize, coordinate, and integrate capabilities across the Fleet Marine Force, Jan. 17, said Ryan Lowcher of Marine Corps Forces Cyber Command.

Commanded by Maj. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage, the current commander

of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Space Command, the Corps' newest unit will integrate, synchronize, and enable information activities that deter adversaries and set conditions for the Fleet Marine Force across the range of military operations.

"The activation of the MCIC is all about warfighting, integration and enabling the Joint Force to meet our national security objectives," said Lt. Gen. Brian Cavanaugh, the commanding general of Marine Corps Forces Command.

Serving as the primary integrator of information-related capabilities that support Service and Fleet Marine Force requirements with seamless coordination, the Marine Corps Information Command will also encompass units previously assigned to the deputy commandant for Information including the Marine Corps Information Operations Center, the Marine Corps Cryptologic Support Battalion, and the Marine Corps Cryptologic office.

Heritage added, "A single commander who can leverage the authorities and approvals needed to synchronize global cyber, space, influence, and intelligence effects creates unity of support for the FMF and generates information advantages in support of commander's objectives."

The Marine Corps Information Command will now serve as the linkage across the commands that conduct operational level planning and will enable the commander to provide task organized detachments leveraging authorities across the range of military operations and in support of campaigning objectives.

Muslim Civil Rights Group Protests Name 'Fallujah' for U.S. Navy Ship



The amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) sails with the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during a photo exercise in the Philippine Sea, Sept. 17, 2022. The future USS Fallujah (LHA 9) will be similar to these ships but equipped with a well deck. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Christopher Lape*

ARLINGTON, Va. — A Muslim civil rights group is protesting the U.S. Navy's selection of the name "Fallujah" as the name of a future amphibious assault ship.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), self-described as the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, "called on the U.S. Navy to change the name of the future America-class amphibious assault ship 'USS

Fallujah,'" in a Dec. 15 press release.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Dec. 14 that a future America-class amphibious assault ship, LHA 9, will be named USS Fallujah. The ship "will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War. The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S. sailing ships or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II," the Navy release said.

The First Battle of Fallujah occurred in April 2004 in an effort to capture or kill insurgents responsible for the killing of four U.S. contractors, according to the Navy Department release. The Second Battle of Fallujah, fought between Nov. 7 and Dec. 23, 2004, was a major U.S. led offensive to retake control of the city from insurgents and foreign fighters. With over 100 coalition forces killed and over 600 wounded, Operation Phantom Fury is considered the bloodiest engagement of the Iraq War and the fiercest urban combat involving U.S. Marines since the Vietnam War's Battle of Hue City.

CAIR has a different regard for the battles.

"The two battles fought in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004, were the bloodiest fighting of the Iraq War. [Hundreds of civilians – including women and children – were killed](#) during the battles," CAIR said in the release. "To this day, the civilian population is reportedly being negatively impacted by the weapons used in those battles."

"Just as our nation would never name a ship the 'USS Abu Ghraib,' the Navy should not name a vessel after notorious battles in Fallujah that left hundreds of civilians dead, and countless children suffering from birth defects for years afterward," said CAIR National Deputy Director Edward Ahmed Mitchell, in the CAIR release. "There must be a better name

for this ship – one that does not evoke horrific scenes from an illegal and unjust war.”

The secretary of the Navy selected the name of the battles “to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah. This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the LHA’s unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage and commitment to freedom displayed by those who fought in the battle.”

“Under extraordinary odds, the Marines prevailed against a determined enemy who enjoyed all the advantages of defending in an urban area,” said Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger, in the announcement. “The Battle of Fallujah is, and will remain, imprinted in the minds of all Marines and serves as a reminder to our Nation, and its foes, why our Marines call themselves the world’s finest.”

SECNAV Names Future America-class Amphibious Assault Ship Fallujah



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The future USS Fallujah will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War. The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S. sailing ships or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II.

“It is an honor to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah,” said Del Toro. “This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the LHA’s unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage and commitment to freedom displayed by

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Along with the ship’s name, Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS Fallujah as Mrs. Donna Berger, who, in her role, will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

Donna Berger is not only the spouse of Gen. David H. Berger, 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, but also an avid advocate and mentor for military families.

America-class amphibious assault ships are designed to support Marine Corps Operational Maneuver From the Sea and Ship to Objective Maneuvers. The America-class ships replaced all of the decommissioned Tarawa-class LHAs and are now optimized for aviation ability, accommodating the Marine Corps’ future Air Combat Element while adding additional aviation maintenance capabilities and increasing fuel capacities and extra cargo storage. With the unique inherent powers of the amphibious

assault ships, they are often called upon to also support humanitarian and other contingency missions upon short notice.

HII Hosts Marine Corps Commandant at Ingalls Shipbuilding



Gen. David H. Berger, the 38th commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, walks the grounds of the HII Ingalls shipyard, meeting leadership, including Ingalls president Kari Wilkinson. *HII* PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division hosted Gen. David H. Berger, the 38th commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, on Dec. 12, the company said in a release. Berger met with Ingalls leadership and toured the shipyard, including two amphibious ships currently under construction, Bougainville (LHA 8) and Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29).

"We value the opportunity to showcase our talented shipbuilders and state-of-the-art facility to the Marine Corps and Navy," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. "It's a great day when our customers see first-hand the work we are completing to support their service, and when we can hear directly from them on requirements."

As the sole builder of the entire San Antonio class of ships, Ingalls has delivered 12 San Antonio-class ships to the Navy and has three more under construction, including Richard M. McCool (LPD 29), Harrisburg (LPD 30) the first Flight II LPD and Pittsburgh (LPD 31). The shipyard is also building large-deck amphibious ships for the Navy and Marine Corps, delivering a total of 15 ships (Tarawa class, LHA 1-5; Wasp class, LHD 1-8; and most recently America class, LHA 6 and LHA 7). The large-deck amphibious ship production line remains online and efficient with the ongoing construction of Bougainville (LHA 8) and LHA 9.

"It's always a good day when you get to see amphibious warships being built," said Gen. Berger, commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. "Amphibious ships are critical for the Marine Corps' ability to modernize for a potential near-peer fight while we still perform our daily crisis response missions around the globe – we need amphibs for all our missions."

Ingalls has designed, built and maintained amphibious ships, destroyers and cutters for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard for nearly 85 years. Recently, nearly \$1 billion was invested in the infrastructure, facility and toolsets at Ingalls enabling shipbuilders, improving product flow and process efficiency, and enhancing product quality. Ingalls is supported by over 700 suppliers across 49 states. As the largest supplier of U.S. Navy surface combatants, Ingalls is simultaneously building four classes of ships and has pioneered the development and production of technologically advanced, highly capable ships for the surface

Navy fleet for decades.