Berger Touts Vehicle-Mounted Naval Strike Missile for Marine Corps

A Naval Strike Missile being fired from a modified, unmanned Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The vehicle-mounted Naval Strike Missile was highlighted by the Marine Corps' commandant as an example of rapid development to meet the challenges of great power competition and enable the Corps to hold enemy naval units at risk from expeditionary bases.

While testifying April 29 before the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Gen. David H. Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, held up a recently released photo of a Naval Strike Missile (NSM) being fired from a modified unmanned Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) known as ROGUE.

The Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, or NMESIS, successfully fired a Naval Strike Missile off the California coast, the system's builder, Raytheon Missiles & Defense, a Raytheon Technologies business, said in an April 28 release. "The inaugural test proved the system's ability to fire a Naval Strike Missile, or NSM, from a U.S. Marine Corps ground launcher and score a direct hit against a surface target at sea. The Marines will use NMESIS to support the U.S. Navy from the shore against enemy ships. NMESIS is comprised of the Raytheon Missiles & Defense-made NSM and a Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires vehicle, produced by Oshkosh Defense."

"Our Naval Strike Missile is a vital weapon for denying enemies the use of key maritime terrain," said Kim Ernzen, vice president of Naval Power at Raytheon Missiles & Defense. "This test further demonstrates our partnership for advancing the Marine Corps' modernization priorities of enabling sea control and denial operations."

"Our role in contributing to [freedom of the seas] is, where [sea] denial, where [sea] control has to happen from a tactical to operational perspective, we can do that by moving the capability around that hold an adversary's navy at risk from sip and from shore," Berger said.

"This is the speed at which we have to develop a capability like that," he said. "This is the brilliance of a couple of young officers and Oshkosh [Defense], and a few other people creating other capabilities long before they're even thought all the way through. This Joint Light Tactical Vehicle is unmanned. The people at Oshkosh and these two [Marine Corps] majors thought, 'We can do this.' They took the cab off the back and they put [the NSM] on the back and a fire control system. Now we can move this around on vessels, put it ashore, and hold an adversary's navy at risk in order to ensure that the lines of the sea are kept open.

“Our job is to support the fleet commander,” Berger said. “The fleet’s job is to support the joint force commander.”

Berger also said a benefit of the NSM is that it is common to the Navy and Marine Corps and can be shifted to where it is needed most.

Elbit Awarded $41M Order as Part of the Night Vision Goggles IDIQ Contract for U.S. Marine Corps

A view of a Marine through the Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle at night. In January 2020, a group of Marines with The

Basic School assessed the Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle night vision system comprising an image-intensifier binocular and enhanced clip-on thermal imager. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Sgt. Kirstin Spanu*

HAIFA, Israel – Elbit Systems Ltd.'s U.S. subsidiary, Elbit Systems of America LLC, has been awarded a delivery order valued at approximately $41 million for the supply of night vision systems and various spare components to the U.S. Marine Corps, the company said in an April 20 release. The order will be executed in Roanoke, Virginia, and will be supplied through March 2022.

This order is part of a $249 million five-year Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggles indefinite delivery indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract from Sept. 6, 2019, under which the U.S. Marine Corps are supplied with Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle (SBNVG) systems consisting of high-performance, white phosphor image intensifier binoculars, modular uncooled thermal imaging sensors and common external power supplies – providing Marines improved mobility and situational awareness during night operations.

"Marines need to quickly understand their surroundings and act to engage their targets – no matter the light conditions – and Elbit Systems of America's SBNVG provides this power in a lightweight, adjustable system that is an ideal upgrade," said Raanan Horowitz, president and CEO of Elbit Systems of America.

Five Marine Officers

Nominated, Renominated to Lt. General

Lt. Gen. David G. Bellon, reappointed to the grade of

lieutenant general and assigned as commander, Marine Forces Reserve, one of several nominations announced April 16. *U.S. MARINE CORPS*

ARLINGTON, Va. — Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced April 16 that the president has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. David G. Bellon for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commander, Marine Forces Reserve; and commander, Marine Forces South. Bellon is currently serving as commander, U.S. Marine Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. George W. Smith Jr. for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Smith is currently serving as the deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Edward D. Banta for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as deputy commandant for installations and logistics, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. Banta is currently serving as commander, Marine Corps Installations Command; and assistant deputy commandant for installations and logistics (facilities), Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Kevin M. Iiams for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, Training and Education Command. Iiams is currently serving as the assistant deputy commandant for combat development and integration; and deputy commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. William M. Jurney for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force. Jurney is currently serving as commanding general, Marine Air Ground Task Force

Training Command; and commanding general, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California.

Boeing to Sustain Compact Lasers for Marines

A Boeing CLWS unit. *THE BOEING CO.*

ST. LOUIS – Boeing was awarded a $2.5 million contract by the U.S. Marine Corps to sustain the service's Compact Laser Weapon System (CLWS) units, the company said in a March 29 release.

The five-year contract includes maintenance services for the Boeing-built CLWS units defending against hostile unmanned aerial systems in theater. Each CLWS unit is equipped with a best-in-class beam director and acquisition, tracking and pointing software to deliver precision protection.

"We're honored to continue our partnership with the Marine Corps," said Kurt Sorenson, Boeing program manager for CLWS. "This will ensure that their systems continue to operate at the highest levels in defense of our warfighters."

Boeing recently increased the maximum beam power and reliability of the CLWS units – providing enhanced protection against larger and more numerous threats at greater range, as well as enabling them to defeat threats more quickly and efficiently.

Boeing has more than 40 years of innovation and experience building directed energy systems, and has produced laser weapons for use in the air, on land and at sea.

Iwo Jima ARG and 24th MEU Deploy After Redefining Integrated Training

The amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) and ships of the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), embarked with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, simulate a strait transit during a composite unit training exercise (COMPTUEX) off the Atlantic coast, March 1, 2021. COMPTUEX is a month-long training event designed to test the ARG-MEU's capabilities against the full spectrum of military operations. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Davis Harris*

NORFOLK, Va. – The Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployed March 25 after completing an intensive, month-long composite training exercise (COMPTUEX) and brief in-port maintenance period, the U.S. 2nd Fleet said in a release.

The ARG-MEU's COMPTUEX was designed to fully integrate roughly 3,700 Sailors and Marines into one cohesive contingency force while testing the units' abilities to carry out sustained operations from the sea. During the exercise, the Blue-Green team executed virtual and live evolutions challenging every major warfare area, including responses to surface and subsurface contacts, electronic attacks, surface

and air amphibious assaults, and precision airstrikes.

COMPTUEX was led by Commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 4 and Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG) staff, during which both groups of assessors provided training and mentorship while evaluating the warfighting capabilities of all units. There were two distinct phases of training that increased in complexity and intensity over time.

At sea, simulated attacks by hostile aircraft, ships, and submarines required active responses by the ARG-MEU in real-time. Additionally, there were several live visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) exercises those fully integrated elements of the ARG and MEU at the tactical team level.

On shore, the landing force conducted raids in daytime and nighttime urban environments. They executed multiple tactical recoveries of aircraft and personnel missions, utilizing Navy as well as Marine aviation assets.

The ARG-MEU team was also assessed on their ability to integrate Navy and Marine Corps forces in a variety of warfare areas, essential to ensuring readiness in a variety of joint mission sets.

“The ARG-MEU proved we are adaptable and can respond to a variety of complex and rapidly changing situations,” said Capt. Darren Nelson, commodore of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 4. “Our success depended on being innovative, thinking strategically, planning operationally, and acting tactically. The training we completed is unique in that only an ARG-MEU conducts this type of combined training in the military.”

The 24th MEU, based out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, is the first East Coast MEU to embark ships with the Department of Defense’s new Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV). The JLTV

is a versatile ground transport vehicle now used by all ground-based elements within the MEU, providing state-of-the-art protection and technology to troops in tow.

Additionally, in response to the commandant of the Marine Corps' new force design, the MEU embarked with a robust Light-Armored Reconnaissance detachment.

"As the nation's crisis response force, the ARG-MEU team must remain ready to respond at a moment's notice when crises arise," explained Col. Eric D. Cloutier, commanding officer, 24th MEU. "This exercise gave our team the opportunity to train how we fight across a range of military operations, providing a force-in-readiness to the fleet that is prepared to decisively engage when called upon."

Emphasizing flexibility during the month-long evolution, this Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) conducted a company-sized amphibious live-fire raid event. During this raid, nearly 100 Marines and Sailors converged on targets at Camp Lejeune's newest range. Finally, the month of ship-to-shore operations culminated with an amphibious assault by a fighting force of nearly 600 Marines and Sailors.

Driving the ARG-MEU's broad spectrum of expeditionary capabilities is its overall readiness as a fighting force. Most notably, this Navy-Marine Corps team took a deliberate approach to maximizing readiness through pre-deployment training while also joining forces to combat COVID-19, using coordinated mitigation procedures before their final at-sea period. In addition to conducting a restriction-of-movement (ROM) prior to embarking for the training exercise and adhering to 100% mask-wearing and other health and safety mitigations, the ARG-MEU were among the first units prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccines once they were approved for emergency use across the Department of Defense.

“The entire ARG-MEU is estimated to have over 90% voluntarily immunized once the last few people receive their second dose underway,” said Nelson. “The impressive number was achieved by making the vaccine available to everyone and by doing everything possible to educate our Sailors and Marines about the vaccine.”

The ARG consists of the amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), transport dock ship USS San Antonio (LPD 17), and dock landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50). Embarked detachments for the Iwo Jima ARG include PHIBRON 4, Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 6, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 26, Tactical Air Control Squadron (TACRON) 21, Naval Beach Group (NBG) 2, Beach Master Unit (BMU) 2, Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 2 and 4, and Sailors from Amphibious Construction Battalion (ACB) 2. Also, joining the training were USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) and USS The Sullivans (DDG 68).

The 24th MEU consists of a ground combat element, Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/8, a logistics combat element, Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 24, and an aviation combat element, Medium Tilt-Rotor Squadron (VMM) 162 Reinforced.

The Iwo Jima ARG-MEU team is manned, trained and equipped to fulfill amphibious requirements in support of maritime security and stability. Amphibious ready groups and larger amphibious task forces provide military commanders a wide range of flexible capabilities including maritime security operations, expeditionary power projection, strike operations, forward naval presence, crisis response, sea control, deterrence, counter-terrorism, information operations, security cooperation and counter-proliferation, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Marine Corps to Procure 18 MQ-9 Reapers to 'Close Kill Chain,' General Says

An MQ-9A Reaper assigned to the 556th Test and Evaluation Squadron sits on the ramp at Creech Air Force Base carrying eight Hellfire missiles. *U.S. Air Force / SrA Haley Stevens*

ARLINGTON, Va.—The Marine Corps plans to procure a total of 18 MQ-9A extended range Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles to operate in support of distributed maritime operations and expeditionary base operations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Corps currently operates two MQ-9As in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. The two are operated by a

Marine UAV squadron (VMU).

“We will procure 16 more for a total of 18,” said Lt. Gen. Eric M. Smith, commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, testifying March 18 before the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. “That’s three [VMU] squadrons of six [each].”

The Reapers – built by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems – being procured have the Block 5-20 upgrades, which will be updated because of the open architecture of the system and will be able “to keep pace with or outpace the threat,” Smith said, who noted that the Reapers have on board “systems that give both inflight protection and protection from tampering.”

Smith said the Reapers could operate from a variety of locations, including the continental United States, Hawaii, Guam, or a partner nation.

The MQ-9A is incredibly important to us to pass data across the battlefield, the closer of the maritime kill chain as we operate underneath an alternate precision navigation and timing network,” Smith said. “That system has the duration and the range to be operated from those bases that we do control and still give us the loiter time that we need to both close the kill chain and to move that asset around something as vast as the Indo-Pacific theater.”

Earlier, the Corps garnered extensive experience with the Reaper by using ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) services provided by General Atomics in support of Marine forces in Southwest Asia.

SECDEF Announces Marine General Promotions

Brig. Gen. Jay M. Bargeron, nominated for appointment to the rank of major general, one of several flag officer nominations

announced March 4. U.S. Marine Corps
ARLINGTON, Va. — Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced on March 4 that the president has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Jay M. Bargeron has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Bargeron is currently serving as president, Marine Corps University, Training and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Brian W. Cavanaugh has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Cavanaugh is currently serving as assistant deputy commandant, programs and resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Dimitri Henry has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Henry is currently serving as director, J-2, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Heritage is currently serving as commanding general, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego; and commnding general, Western Recruiting Region, San Diego, California.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Christopher A. McPhillips has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. McPhillips is currently serving as commanding general, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Okinawa, Japan.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Robert B. Sofge Jr. has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Sofge is currently serving as deputy commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific, Camp Smith, Hawaii.

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Matthew G. Trollinger has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Trollinger is currently serving as deputy director, Politico-

Military Affairs (Middle East), J-5, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Joseph R. Clearfield has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Clearfield is currently serving as assistant chief of staff, G-3, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland.

Marine Corps Col. Mark H. Clingan has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Clingan is currently serving as chief of staff, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan.

Marine Corps Col. Simon M. Doran has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Doran is currently serving as special assignment officer, Royal Air Force, British Armed Forces, London, United Kingdom.

Marine Corps Col. Walker M. Field has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Field is currently serving as military fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, New York.

Marine Corps Col. Anthony M. Henderson has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Henderson is currently serving as director, concepts and plans, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

Marine Corps Col. Michael E. McWilliams has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. McWilliams is currently serving as executive assistant for deputy commandant, installations and logistics, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Matthew T. Mowery has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Mowery is currently serving as operations and readiness branch head,

Aviation Plans, Programs, Joint/Congressional Matters, Doctrine and Budget Branch, Aviation Branch, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Andrew M. Niebel has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Niebel is currently serving as chief of staff, Marine Corps Installations Command, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Col. Ahmed T. Williamson has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Williamson is currently serving as military assistant, Office of the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Reserve

Marine Corps Reserve Brig. Gen. Mark A. Hashimoto has been nominated for appointment to the rank of major general. Hashimoto is currently serving as commanding general, Force Headquarters Group, U.S. Marine Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Marine Corps Reserve Col. Sean N. Day has been nominated for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Day is currently serving as deputy commander, Force Headquarters Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Admiral Praises Marine Corps’

Last Hornet Carrier Deployment

An F/A-18C Hornet, from the “Death Rattlers” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 323, makes an arrested landing on the flight deck of the USS Nimitz (CVN 68). Nimitz, flagship of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, is currently conducting routine operations in U.S. 3rd Fleet. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Charles DeParlier

ARLINGTON, Va.—The last deployment of the F/A-18C Hornet on an aircraft carrier ended last week with the return of the “Death Rattlers” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 (VMFA-323) from a deployment with Carrier Air Wing 17 on board USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

The Death Rattlers returned to their home base, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California on Feb. 25, the day before Nimitz arrived at San Diego to offload CVW-17 personnel before heading to is homeport of Bremerton, Washington.

Rear Adm. James Kirk, commander, Carrier Strike Group 11 and the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, told reporters in a Feb. 26 teleconference that VMFA-323, despite flying the oldest jets deployed on a carrier, “performed fantastic yeoman work.

Obviously with older aircraft, they do have challenges, but they rose to those challenges. Those maintainers did a great job, and those Marine pilots executed those missions, whether it was in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Octave Quartz, or Operation Resolute Support, or the just-presence missions we did or the operations we did during dual-carrier ops in the South China Sea with the Ronald Reagan Strike Group of the TR [Theodore Roosevelt] Strike Group.

“That Marine squadron met the mark, hit the mission,” Kirk said.

The deployment of Marine Corps F/A-18A and F/A-18C squadrons on carriers over the last two decades was a manifestation of the TACAIR Integration Plan, originally designed to provide one Marine VMFA squadron for each of 10 carrier air wings. Because of heavy commitments to wars in Afghanistan and then Iraq, the plan never fielded more than four VMFAs in the carrier air wings. With the transition of some VMFA squadrons to the F-35B and F-35C Lightning II strike fighters, the number of VMFAs on carriers dwindled to just one, VMFA-323.

The program is alive, however, with VMFA-314 — the Corps’ first F-35C squadron — preparing to deploy with a carrier air wing in 2022. The Corps is procuring 67 F-35Cs, a number that will allow it eventually to field four VMFAs equipped with the type in carrier air wings.

VMFA-323 will continue to operate the F/A-18C and will from a fleet replacement detachment to assume the role of training pilots and maintainers for Marine Corps F/A-18C/D squadrons after the fleet replacement squadron, VMFAT-101, is deactivated during fiscal 2023, as the Hornet training load decreases as the type is retired in 2030. According to the Marine Corps’ latest training plan, promulgated in 2019, VMFA-323 will be the Corp’s last active-duty Hornet squadron and will upgrade to the F-35B.

The Death Rattlers were activated in 1943 with F4U Corsair fighters and flew combat missions against Japanese forces during World War II. They flew Corsairs again in the Korean War and F-4B Phantom II fighters in the Vietnam War. They flew Phantoms from carriers after the Vietnam war and were one of the Corps' first Hornet squadrons. Together with VMFA-314, they made the Corps' first carrier deployment in the type, flying in combat from USS Coral Sea (CV 43) in 1986 against Libyan targets during Operations Prairie Fire and El Dorado Canyon.

The last F/A-18C carrier deployment of a Navy squadron ended in April 2018 with the return of Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA-34) with Carrier Air Wing Two from USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). VFA-34 was the Navy's last active-duty deploying squadron to operate the legacy Hornet and has since upgraded to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

The Navy is divesting itself of the legacy Hornets as fast as procurement of the F/A-18E/F and F-35C permit. The Blue Angels flight demonstration squadron recently completed the transition to the Super Hornet and soon the Navy's sole reserve VFA squadron will make the transition.

15th MEU Supports Operation Inherent Resolve from Makin Island ARG

A Marine Corps F35B Lightning II assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 164 (Reinforced), 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), launches from the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8) during flight operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, Feb. 13. U.S. Marine Corps / Sgt. Sarah Stegall

PERSIAN GULF – The Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) began air operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), Feb. 13, the 15th MEU Public Affairs said in a Feb. 16 release.

Close air support operations and defensive counter air support operations were carried out by Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 164 (Reinforced), the aviation combat element of the 15th MEU, as part of broader U.S. Central Command counterterrorism operations in the region.

U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II aircraft departed from the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), flagship of the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, to execute the

long-range strike.

“Long range F-35B Lightning II strike operations demonstrate the ARG/MEU’s ability to project air power well beyond the shore,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Christopher J. Bronzi, the 15th MEU commanding officer. “We look forward to exercising the capabilities in our arsenal while in theater and remain ready to deliver those capabilities at any time if called upon.”

The Makin Island ARG transited through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Arabian Gulf on Feb. 8. The Makin Island ARG and 15th MEU’s presence in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations demonstrates the U.S. and its regional partners’ commitment to the free flow of commerce, regional maritime security and freedom of navigation.

“This mission is a strong example of the value a deployed naval expeditionary force brings to combatant commanders and joint partners in the region,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Stewart Bateshansky, Makin Island ARG commodore. “The MEU’s ability to source combat sorties from the Makin Island, while simultaneously supporting training and operations, is a testament to the flexibility and responsiveness of our Navy and Marine Corps team.”

The Makin Island ARG and embarked 15th MEU provide the combatant commander with a responsive, flexible and forward-deployed asset capable of maritime power projection, contingency operations and crisis response, shaping the operational environment to protect the United States and allied interests in any threat environment.

“We are proud and excited to be able to support missions in areas of the world where we are most needed,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Christopher Kelly, VMM-164 (Rein.) executive officer. “Conducting a long range strike mission with fifth

generation F-35B fighters from amphibious assault ships demonstrates the versatility this platform brings to the joint force.”

The U.S. 5th Fleet AOO encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

First ACV Command Variant Delivered to Marine Corps for Testing

U.S. Marines with Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch, Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity, drive new Amphibious Combat

Vehicles along the beach during low-light surf transit testing at AVTB Beach on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Dec. 18, 2019. U.S. Marine Corps / Lance Cpl. Andrew Cortez
STAFFORD, Va. – BAE Systems has handed over the first of a new variant of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle to the U.S. Marine Corps for testing, the company said in a Feb. 18 release. The Command variant (ACV-C) is designed to provide the highest levels of communications, coordination, and analysis on the battlefield to support command and control.

BAE Systems is under contract to deliver two variants to the Marine Corps under the ACV Family of Vehicles program: the ACV personnel carrier (ACV-P) and the ACV-C. A 30mm cannon (ACV-30) is currently under contract for design and development and a recovery variant (ACV-R) is also planned.

The ACV-C employs multiple workstations for Marines to maintain and manage situational awareness in the battle space. The workstations access independent networks for advanced digital communications while on the move. This capability supports immediate information synchronization in the application of combat power.

“This ACV’s base design for payload makes it a uniquely adaptable platform for the integration of numerous mission capability sets,” said John Swift, director of amphibious programs at BAE Systems. “The delivery of the first ACV-C for testing is significant as it provides Marines with advanced operational control for defeating adversaries. Marines will be able to quickly receive and analyze data, coordinate battlefield functions, and transmit information to provide terminal mission control rapidly from the mobile protected ACV-C.”

The ACV platform was designed to grow and adapt to mission needs, allowing space for new capabilities as technology evolves such as turreted, reconnaissance, electronic warfare, anti-air, and UAS systems integration.

The Marine Corps and BAE Systems entered full-rate production on the ACV program with a contract award in December, achieving its most significant milestone to date along with the Marine Corps' decision to declare initial operational capability. Work is currently underway on the ACV-30 variant.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE Systems locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and York, Pennsylvania.