

NAVAIR Orders 80 Blackjack, 93 ScanEagle UAVs



U.S. Marines with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163 (Reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) aboard the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26), prepare to launch an RQ-21A Blackjack in March 2019. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Israel Chincio

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The Navy has awarded a contract for Blackjack and ScanEagle unmanned

aerial vehicles for the Navy and Marine Corps and several foreign nations.

Insitu Inc.

of Bingen, Washington, was awarded by the Naval Air Systems Command a \$390.1

million firm-fixed-price, indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract for

up to 63 RQ-21A [Blackjack] attrition air vehicles for the U.S. Marine Corps

and U.S. Navy,” a June 28 Defense Department announcement said. “In addition,

this contract provides for up to six RQ-21A unmanned aircraft systems and up to

17 RQ-21A air vehicles for foreign military sales customers, including the

governments of Canada, Poland and Oman.”

Insitu also will

also provide up to 93 ScanEagle UASs in various configurations, the

announcement said. “In addition, this contract provides for associated

services, including training, test and engineering,

development of engineering change proposals, operations support, organizational level maintenance, field service representatives, land and ship surveys, hardware site activations, hardware installs, repairs, and data.”

The RQ-21A

Blackjack has seen service as a surveillance platform with the Marine Corps in

Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya. Contractor-owned and operated ScanEagles

have operated in support of U.S. and partner nations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The ScanEagle also has been operated by U.S. Special Operations command and by several foreign nations.

The orders

are expected to be completed by June 2022.

Marine Corps Awards BAE Team Contract to Develop ACV Family of Vehicles



Marines from the Amphibious Combat Vehicle new equipment training team complete an operator course in the vehicle. BAE and Iveco Defence Vehicles will team to produce the ACV Family of Vehicles. U.S. Marine Corps/Ashley Calingo

STAFFORD, Va. – BAE Systems along with teammate Iveco Defence Vehicles has been awarded a \$67

million contract modification by the U.S. Marine Corps to develop new variants for the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) Family of Vehicles, BAE announced in a release.

“The ACV has proven to be a versatile platform capable of numerous configurations to meet current and future mission requirements,” said John Swift, director of amphibious programs at BAE. “With this award, BAE Systems will be able to develop a family of vehicles that will deliver the technology and capability the Marines require to accomplish their mission in support of our national security.”

The contract calls for the design and development of command (ACV-C) and 30 mm medium caliber cannon (ACV-30) variants. The ACV-C variant incorporates seven workstations to provide situational awareness and control of the battle space. The ACV-30 integrates a 30 mm cannon to provide the lethality and protection Marines need while leaving ample room for troop capacity and payload.

BAE Systems was previously awarded a low-rate initial production contract last June 2018 for the personnel variant (ACV-P). The Marine Corps announced the ACV had successfully completed anticipated requirements testing and would no longer be pursuing an envisioned incremental ACV 1.1 and ACV 1.2 development approach. The program is now known as the ACV Family of Vehicles,

which encompasses the breadth and depth of the vehicle's capabilities and multiple variants.

First Marine F-35C Squadron Retires its Hornets



The first Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 "Black Knights" F-35C aircraft from Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore flies in formation over the Sierra Nevada mountains with a VFMA-314 squadron F/A-18A++. U.S. Navy/Lt. Cmdr. Darin Russell ARLINGTON,

Va. – The Marine Corps' first operational squadron to fly the F-35C

carrier-capable version of the Lightning II joint strike fighter has retired

its last F/A-18 Hornet strike fighter.

In ceremonies

held June 21 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, Marine Fighter

Attack Squadron 314 (VMFA-314) retired its last Hornet, an F/A-18A++ version.

The Black Knights, as the squadron is known, are now in transition to the F-35C

at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, under the tutelage of the Navy's

F-35C replacement training squadron, VFA-125.

The Marine

Corps flies both the short-takeoff/vertical landing F-35B version and the F-35C

aircraft carrier version. The Corps currently fields three operational F-35B squadrons, VMFA-121, -211, and -122.

The Corps is procuring 67 F-35Cs to equip squadrons that will deploy with Navy carrier air wings. In recent years the Corps has assigned two VMFA F/A-18 squadrons to deploy with carrier air wings.

Marine Corps Awards BAE Systems Contract to Develop ACV Mission Variants



Marine Corps Systems Command awarded a contract to BAE Systems to produce and deliver the Amphibious Combat Vehicle.

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has awarded BAE Systems a contract to develop two variants of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) and manufacture one of them.

Marine Corps

Systems Command has awarded “a not-to-exceed [\$67 million] modification for

firm-fixed-price, cost-plus-fixed-fee contract for the development of

engineering drawings, manufacture and test support for three [ACV] command-and-control

Mission Role Variants (MRVs) and the development of

engineering drawings for the ACV medium-caliber-cannon MRV,” according to a Defense Department release.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzPcMB_9Ic0

BAE Systems

is building the ACV for the Marine Corps as an amphibious troop carrier to replace the four-decade-old Assault Amphibious Vehicle. The AAV7 is fielded in several variants, and the Corps plans to field the ACV in variants as well.

The

command-and-control (C2) MRV will be the first variant of the ACV. The C2

variant will be designed for a commander and staff and equipped with computer

displays and communications systems to enable the commander to maintain

situational awareness of the battlefield.

A variant

with a medium-caliber gun atop the ACV will follow.

Work is

expected to be completed by Sept. 30, 2022.

JLTV Approved for Full-Rate Production for Marine Corps,

Army



A Joint Light Tactical Vehicle during a live demonstration at School of Infantry-West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, in February. U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Timothy Smithers

WASHINGTON

– Bruce Jette, assistant secretary of the U.S. Army for acquisition, logistics

and technology, on June 20 approved the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV)

program's transition into full-rate production, the Army Program Executive

Office for Combat Support and Combat Service Support announced in a release.

The

approval follows an Army decision in December to begin fielding the new

platform with the Army's 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart,

Georgia, in April. The 1-3 ID became the Army's first unit equipped with JLTVs

in April after receiving more than 300 vehicles.

Fieldings

to the Ordnance School, Fort Lee, Virginia, the 84th Training Command, Fort

McCoy, Wisconsin, the Marine Corps' School of Infantry-West at Camp Pendleton,

California, as well as the Marine School of Infantry-East, Camp Lejeune, North

Carolina, have also been completed.

"Thanks

to tremendous teamwork across two services on requirements, resources, program

management, testing and other areas, this is a great modernization success story.

JLTV shows how teams focused on stable requirements, mature technologies and the right incentives can deliver meaningful capability advancements in a cost-conscious way," said Jeffrey White, Jette's principal deputy.

The JLTV family of vehicles is designed to restore payload and performance that were traded from light tactical vehicles to add protection in recent conflict, giving commanders an improved protected mobility solution and the first vehicle purpose-built for modern battlefield networks.

"Getting an improved capability into the hands of Soldiers and Marines has been our team's driving focus throughout this program," said Michael Sprang, project manager, Joint Program Office, Joint Light Tactical Vehicles.

"We are also grateful for Soldier feedback on new features and enhancements," Sprang continued. "The Soldiers of the 1st ABCT, 3rd Infantry Division provided valuable input on enhancements such as increased situational awareness, reduction of system noise, a troop seat kit, and a companion JLTV trailer. Their assessments helped bring us all to a successful Full-Rate Production decision."

The JLTV

program remains on schedule and on budget to replace a significant portion of

the Army's High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle fleet.

The JLTV comes in

two variants and four mission package configurations: general purpose, close combat

weapons carrier, heavy guns carrier and a utility vehicle. The

U.S. Navy and

Air Force also plan to field JLTVs in much smaller quantities.

"The full-rate production decision is a key

milestone for the JLTV program, closing out the low-rate initial production

(LRIP) phase, which began in 2015, George

Mansfield, vice president and general manager of joint programs for Oshkosh

Defense, said in a June 21 statement. "Important insights from manufacturing and rigorous developmental and operational test during LRIP

contributed to shaping the vehicle's current configuration.

The program remains

on schedule and on budget and ensures our troops have the protection,

connection and extreme off-road mobility they need today for current and future

battlefields. The JLTV is the only light tactical vehicle being fielded today

that can maneuver within combat formations."

Corps Begins Fielding Mobile Satellite Communication System



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Frankie Garcia calls for a radio check using a PRC-117G at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Jason Monty MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps recently began fielding a next-generation narrowband satellite communication system that assists warfighters in connecting to networks on the battlefield, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) said in a June 12 release.

Fielded in the first quarter of 2019, the Mobile User Objective System provides satellite communication capabilities to mobile or stationary Marines. The system enables the warfighter to leverage cellular technology to increase access to voice and data communication while using the MUOS network.

“MUOS is another way for warfighters to communicate in a tactical environment,” said Eddie Young, project officer of Multiband Radio II Family of Systems at MCSC.

“The system brings [satellite communications] capabilities in various formats to Marines.”

The MUOS capability encompasses updated firmware to the AN/PRC-117G radio system and one of three antenna kits. The antennas help Marines

simultaneously access satellite networks and gives them secure and nonsecure internet access. MUOS also improves overall reliability in urban environments, challenging vegetation and other arduous conditions.

“MUOS is another way for warfighters to communicate in a tactical environment. The system brings [satellite communications] capabilities in various formats to Marines.”

*Eddie Young, project officer, Multiband Radio II Family of Systems,
Marine Corps Systems Command*

“MUOS is essentially software and an antenna capability augmenting existing hardware,” said Noah Slep, systems engineer at MCSC. “It’s similar to adding an application to a cellphone.”

The first service to widely employ MUOS, the Corps is deploying thousands of antenna kits for the AN/PRC-117G radio system and hundreds of diplexers that enable vehicular systems to access MUOS satellites.

“The Marine Corps is leading all services in terms of getting MUOS to warfighters,” Young said.

Satellite communication has become increasingly important for the Corps in the 21st century. According to the Department of Defense, more than 50 percent of DoD

satellite communication involves narrowband communication. Yet, this form of communication accounts for less than 2 percent of the DoD's bandwidth, making it an efficient way to transmit information.

MUOS is particularly important because the satellite communications infrastructure of the legacy system is nearing its expiration, Slemph said. As a result, the Corps intends to incrementally replace the older capabilities with the MUOS waveform, enabling more Marines to access ultra-high frequency tactical satellite communications.

Prior to fielding MUOS, MCSC had to demonstrate to the Milestone Decision Authority that the system was safe, met technical performance and was ready for use by the warfighter. Since MUOS's Field User Evaluation in 2017, Marines have raved about the benefits of the system.

"Our Marines find MUOS useful in completing their missions," Young said. "We've received a lot of positive feedback thus far."

The efforts of Young's team in getting the system out to the warfighter have not gone unnoticed. In May 2018, at a Narrowband Working Group conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the Joint Staff J6 and the DoD Chief Information Officer recognized

Young and Slemph for leading the services in employing MUOS.

The J6 and DoD

CIO also emphasized the joint effort between the Multiband Radio II team and

the Naval Information Warfare Center in using the Multiple Reconfigurable

Training Systems, an interactive training aid that will be used to assist in

the rapid fielding of MUOS.

“It was

motivating to see that we were recognized for our efforts, because the team had

put in a considerable amount of time and effort to make this happen,” Young said.

“We recognize the warfighter needs this capability, and we’ve done everything

we can to get it to them in a timely manner.”

Marine Corps Orders 30 G/ATORs from Northrop Grumman



The Marine Corps has contracted for 30 G/ATORs plus parts and retrofit kits. Northrop Grumman Systems Corp.

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has awarded a contract to Northrop Grumman Systems Corp. in Baltimore for full-rate production of the TPS-80 Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR).

According to a June 7 Department of Defense release, the

Marine Corps Systems Command awarded to Northrop Grumman a \$958 million contract for the purchase of 30 full-rate production G/ATORs plus spare parts and retrofit kits.

The Marine Corps plans to procure a total of 45 G/ATOR units.

The TPS-80 is a three-dimensional, expeditionary, short/medium-range, multirole radar capable of detecting low-observable, low-radar-cross-section targets such as rockets, artillery, mortars, cruise missiles and unmanned aerial systems.

G/ATOR is being developed and fielded in three blocks and will be used by Marine Air-Ground Task Force across a range of its capabilities. The capability blocks will cover air combat element and ground combat element missions, replacing three in-service legacy radars and the functionality of two systems already retired.

The Program Executive Officer Land Systems in Quantico, Virginia, is the portfolio manager of the G/ATOR program.

Navy Orders Reaper ISR Services for Marine Corps



A U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Reaper sits on the flight line at

Hurlburt Field, Florida. Naval Air Systems Command awarded General Atomics a \$36.5 million contract modification to provide ISR services with the Reaper. U.S. Air Force/Staff Sgt. John Bainter

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded a contract to General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI) to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) services through use of Group 5 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

According to a May 30 Defense Department contract announcement, Naval Air Systems Command awarded GA-ASI a \$36.5 million contract modification to provide ISR services with contractor-owned/contractor-operated MQ-9 Reaper UAVs, the same UAV used by the U.S. Air Force.

The Marine Corps extensively has used contractor ISR services in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, with the smaller Insitu ScanEagle, and has employed its new service-owned Boeing Insitu RQ-21A Blackjack UAV in the same roles. The use of the larger Reaper is filling a gap in ISR coverage for the Marine Corps.

The Corps has developed a requirement for its own Reapers and has requested two in the fiscal 2020 defense budget.

The current contract modification is for nine months of Reaper services, scheduled to run through February 2020 at overseas locations and at Yuma, Arizona.

Bell V-280 Valor Receives High Marks During Low-Speed Agility Testing



The Bell V-280 Valor in action. Bell Helicopter
FORT WORTH, Texas – The Bell V-280 Valor recently completed flight demonstrations ahead of schedule of its low-speed agility key performance parameter in the U.S. Army-led Joint Multi-Role Technology Demonstrator (JMR TD) program, Bell Helicopter announced.

The V-280 Valor, which the U.S. Marine Corps is monitoring for possible use as well, has demonstrated in flight testing that it has the raw control power in pitch, roll and yaw maneuvers to meet the Army's Level 1 handling qualities requirements, which is the highest performance standard for agility.

"This latest flight milestone proves that the V-280 Valor tilt-rotor delivers first-rate handling for pilots during low-speed maneuvers without sacrificing speed, range or payload. ..."

Ryan Ehinger, V-280 program manager at Bell

This flight testing validates Bell's engineering models and development processes to design, build and test an aircraft on an aggressive development schedule that meets Army performance requirements.

"This latest flight milestone proves that the V-280 Valor tilt-rotor delivers first-rate handling for pilots during low-speed maneuvers without sacrificing speed, range or payload that the military needs for multidomain operations," said Ryan Ehinger, the V-280 program manager at Bell.

Flight testing of the V-280 Valor.

For pilots, this achievement provides additional proof that the V-280 will have unprecedented agility on the objective (at the "X") for operational effectiveness, according to the Bell release. The aircraft's digital flight controls and performance-driven design increases mission effectiveness by providing a high level of agility, reducing pilot workload and enhancing flight safety.

As the JMR TD period of performance winds down, Bell and Team Valor continue to expand the flight envelope and demonstrate new capabilities to prove the V-280 Valor's key technologies and reduce the risk for future vertical lift programs.

The latest flight statistics for the V-280 include:

- Forward flight over 300 knots true airspeed.
- More than 110 hours of flight and over 225 rotor-turn hours.
- Greater than 50-degree banked turns.
- 4,500-feet-per-minute rate of climb and sustained flight at an altitude of 11,500 feet.
- Single flight ferry of more than 370 miles.
- Demonstrated Level 1 low-speed agility with fly-by-wire controls.
- In-flight transitions between cruise mode and vertical takeoff and landing.

Marine AV-8B Harrier Attack Jet Crashes Near Cherry Point; Pilot Ejects Safely



An AV-8B Harrier similar to the one out of Marine Corps

Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, that went down May 20. The pilot ejected safely. No injuries were reported on the ground. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Matthew Teutsch

ARLINGTON, Va. – An AV-8B Harrier II based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, crashed May 20 near Cherry Branch, according to May 20 and May 21 releases from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Strategic Communications. The pilot ejected safely.

The Harrier II pilot was transported to Carolina East Medical Center in New Bern for evaluation and was released with no injuries, the May 21 release said. There are no reports of civilian casualties or property damage.

Personnel from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing responded to the scene and assisted local authorities, who had responded first.

The pilot was assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 542, a unit of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. Cherry Point is home of three Marine attack squadrons and one Marine attack training squadron, all of which fly the Harrier II.

The aircraft is cordoned off at the crash site and an emergency reclamation team is onsite and beginning recovery operations.

The Marines of VMA-542 “are working closely with the Marines of Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting, Explosive Ordnance Disposal and both military and local authorities,” the May 21 release said. “The scene has been

deemed safe and secure by all parties involved, but recovery personnel are still implementing environmental and personal protective measures.”

“I would like to start by thanking the Craven County sheriff’s office and the community for their ongoing support,” said Maj. Gen. Karsten Heckl, commanding general of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

“On days like this, our dedication to duty is reaffirmed, and we are reminded how proud we are to call Havelock our home. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries. The safety of our Marines and the local community is of the utmost importance to us, and we are extremely grateful that everyone who was involved is OK.”

The cause of the incident is still under investigation.

According to one source, the Marine Corps AV-8B fleet has lost 104 aircraft (36%) of its aircraft in mishaps over the service life of the jet. An additional 13 were combat losses – either shot down, destroyed in a ground attack or damaged by enemy fire and not repaired. The Marine Corps plans to keep the Harrier II in service until 2028.