

Navy's Triton UAV to Provide Targeting for LRASM



MQ-4C Triton | Credit: Northrop Grumman

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – An upgrade to the U.S. Navy's MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicle will enable it to provide targeting for the AGM-158 Long-Range Anti-ship Missile (LRASM), senior Navy officials said.

In a May 1, 2024, Nickolas H. Guertin, assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition; Vice Admiral James Pitts, deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Requirements and Capabilities; and Lieutenant General Karsten S. Heckl, deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration and Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, testified before the Subcommittee on Seapower of the Senate Armed Services

Committee. A written joint statement was submitted for the record and provided some detail on the planned MQ-4C upgrades.

“The MQ-4 program is meeting schedule objectives, completing Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in July 2023 with its first orbit stand up in INDOPACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command,” the statement said. “The Program is currently in the process of standing up its remaining two operational orbits in EUCOM [U.S. European Command] and CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command], scheduled for Q2FY24 and Q1FY25 respectively.”

The MQ-4C, built by Northrop Grumman, is now deployed to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam and Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily. The site of the future CENTCOM deployment has not been announced.

“The MQ-4 will undergo continuous spiral upgrades throughout the next four years, to include Link-16 targeting with LRASM in 2024 culminating in Full Operational Capability in FY28 enabling near-24/7 ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] coverage in simultaneous theaters of operation,” the statement said.

The LRASM, built by Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control, is designed to be deployed on Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet strike fighters and P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, as well as Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers.

As noted in a May 1 Defense Department contract announcement, the Navy awarded Lockheed Martin a \$288 million contract modification to support development of the AGM-158C-3, an extended-range version of the LRASM. The C-3 version would include “advanced communications and survivability capabilities while supporting maritime strike missions for the Navy,” the announcement said.

SECNAV Names Future America-class Amphibious Assault Ship USS Helmand Province



From SECNAV Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that a future America-class amphibious assault ship will be named USS Helmand Province (LHA 10). Secretary Del Toro made the announcement, today, during the final day of Modern Day Marine 2024 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

The future USS Helmand Province commemorates the multiple U.S. Marine Corps operations that took place in Afghanistan's

Helmand Province as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). 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. Secretary Del Toro named LHA 9, the future USS Fallujah, in 2022.

“In keeping with naval tradition of naming our Navy’s amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, I am honored to announce today that the future LHA-10 will be named USS Helmand Province,” said Secretary Del Toro. “Recognizing the bravery and sacrifice of our Marines and Sailors who fought for almost 20 years in the mountains of Afghanistan.”

Initiating the first U.S. ground offensive of OEF, on Oct. 19, 2001, helicopters launched from USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) lifted Task Force Sword (FT-11) to Objective Rhino, a remote airstrip in Helmand Province. Following the airstrip’s seizure, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) arrived on Nov. 25, 2001 to establish Camp Rhino. It was one of the longest ship-to-shore amphibious operations in history. Elements of the 26th MEU (Special Operations Command) subsequently reinforced the 15th MEU on Dec. 4, 2001. Afterward, Marine presence in Helmand remained constant, though minimal. On April 29, 2008, the 24th MEU stormed Taliban-held Garmser, then staged into southern Helmand on June 1, 2008. With allied support, the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade launched Operation Strike of the Sword on July 2, 2009. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines later conducted operation Sangin Moshtrarak Naweed in May 2012. This was one of OEF’s largest air assault operations. By 2013, with relative regional stability secured, Marines trained Afghan forces to maintain security in advance of the late 2014 drawdown.

“For Marines, Helmand Province is a place of bittersweet memories,” said Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith. “An entire generation of Marines wrote another chapter

in the storied history of our Corps there, as warriors, but also as peacebuilders. Their legacy is defined by the spirit they embodied and the lives they touched. I look forward to the day when the USS Helmand Province will steam forward and carry Marines on their way to write new chapters—in peace, and if called, in war.”

Along with the ship’s name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS Helmand Province as Mrs. Trish Smith, the spouse of Gen. Smith. She is an active volunteer for Marine Corps programs, including the Cornerstone Program, and Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (LINKS) program. She is an advocate and mentor for military families. In her role as sponsor, Trish Smith will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“Sponsoring the USS Helmand Province is an honor beyond words,” said Trish Smith. “I am looking forward to a lifelong relationship with the ship’s leaders, but more importantly, with the generations of Marines, Sailors, and their families that she will carry abroad. Together, we will forever carry the memories of those who served in Helmand.”

During his remarks, Secretary Del Toro reiterated that Marines on naval vessels, such as the future USS Helmand Province, are building relationships with our allies and partners in support of integrated deterrence. The Marine Corps remains focused on modernizing to fight and win against current and future threats in any clime and place.

“The work we ask our Marines and Sailors to do every day is anything but ordinary or routine, and in many cases extremely dangerous. It is incumbent upon all of us, including government and industry, to leverage every resource at our disposal to ensure our Marines have what they need to be successful in their assigned missions and return home safely to their loved ones,” said Secretary Del Toro.

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.

More information on amphibious assault ships can be found [here](#).

Modern Day Marine is an annual trade show and exposition which showcases the latest innovations and technologies in military equipment, weapons, and gear and is primarily aimed at U.S. Marines and defense industry representatives. The show provides a forum for Marine Corps leaders to collaborate with our industry partners, Congressional stakeholders, and Department of Defense leadership on current and future initiatives. Engagements during the expo are intended to reinforce existing programs and priorities and set conditions for future initiatives.

April 30 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command

April 30, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately [1:52](#) p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 30, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed an uncrewed surface vessel (USV) in Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined the USV presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

Navy Launches Talent Pipeline Expansion in Southern California



Representatives from the U.S. Navy and industry launched the Southern California Talent Pipeline Program in Newport Beach, California, April 26. The Southern California Talent Pipeline Program will engage hundreds of shipbuilding and ship sustainment suppliers across the region to create maritime-focused manufacturing pipelines that revitalize the defense workforce by addressing critical skill gaps.

By Team Submarine Public Affairs, April 30, 2024

WASHINGTON –The U.S. Navy’s Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) program launched the Southern California Talent Pipeline Program in Newport Beach, California, April 26.

The Southern California Talent Pipeline Program will engage hundreds of shipbuilding and ship sustainment suppliers across the region to create maritime-focused manufacturing pipelines that revitalize the defense workforce by addressing critical skill gaps.

“The strength of the talent pipeline is as vital as any

capability of a submarine,” said Program Executive Officer Undersea Warfare Systems Rear Adm. Todd Weeks and executive sponsor, Southern California Talent Pipeline Project. “The skilled tradespeople we need, whether welders, machinists, electricians, and more are the structural foundation that will allow us to build and maintain the world’s most advanced submarines.”

According to Weeks, over the next 10 years, the SIB will need more than 140,000 skilled employees to build and sustain the Navy’s submarine fleet.

The Southern California launch aims to mirror prior Talent Pipeline Program (TPPs) in maritime centers of gravity in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Hampton Roads, Virginia; Long Island, New York; and Boston, Massachusetts.

The Navy and the nation’s submarine industrial base are supporting the largest submarine recapitalization effort in nearly 50 years, driving a significant increase in demand across the industrial base. This launch – part of a continued effort to strengthen and expand the Nation’s defense workforce – brought together partners from industry, academia, and leaders from the local community to create and sustain a talent pipeline that enables employers to re-capitalize their workforce through recruiting, hiring, training, and retention.

“As we launch this vital Training Pipeline here in Southern California, it’s important to remember the Submarine Industrial Base isn’t a robotic factory,” said Weeks. “When we talk about the SIB, we’re talking about the workforce. It is the people who are constructing the most advanced submarines in the world and initiatives like these are an investment in the growing workforce, in security, and in stability.

The SIB Program’s TPPs have already proved successful in other

parts of the country. Since the first one launched in Pennsylvania in 2021, the five TPPs have supported over 300 small and medium maritime suppliers and facilitated the employment of more than 2,700 individuals. Across the 2023-2024 academic year, the target includes more than 400 companies hiring approximately 3,500 individuals as part of these six TPPs.

April 29 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, April 29, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 10:00 a.m. and 5:20 p.m. (Sanaa time) on April 29, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired three anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) and three UAVs from Yemen into the Red Sea towards MV Cyclades, a Malta-flagged, Greece-owned vessel. Initial reports indicate there were no injuries and the vessel continued on its way.

Earlier, at 7:49 a.m., U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one Houthi launched airborne unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) on a flight path towards USS Philippine Sea and USS Laboon in the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damages reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

It was determined the UAV presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

April 28 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command, April 28, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 1:48 and 2:27 a.m. (Sanaa time), April 28, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) successfully engaged five airborne unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the Red Sea.

It was determined the UAVs presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

First Mine Countermeasures Mission Package Embarked on USS Canberra



A mine countermeasures unmanned surface vehicle is craned aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra (LCS 30), as a part of the first embarkation of the Mine Countermeasures (MCM) mission package, April 23. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Vance Hand)

[By Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants \(PEO USC\) Public Affairs](#)

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy embarked the first Mine Countermeasures Mission Package (MCM MP) aboard USS Canberra (LCS 30), April 18, service officials announced. With the MCM mission package now onboard LCS 30, the Navy is looking forward to the first MCM Mission Package deployment in Fiscal Year 2025.

As part of the embark process, the Navy installed sensors, unmanned vehicles, support containers and the software that enables Sailors to execute MCM operations from an Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship. The embarkation marks the formal turnover of the MCM mission package to the ship, signifying the crew is ready to commence onboard

training and maintenance of the mission package in preparation for its first deployment.

“Today, the LCS Mission Modules program delivers to the Fleet a modernized and integrated MCM mission package that removes Sailors from the minefield and allows for the future retirement of legacy MCM ships,” said Capt. Matthew Lehmann, program manager of the LCS Mission Modules (PMS 420) program office.

An integrated suite of unmanned maritime systems and sensors, the MCM mission package locates, identifies, and destroys mines in the littorals while increasing the ship’s standoff distance from the threat area. Embarked with the MCM mission package, an LCS or a vessel of opportunity can conduct the full spectrum of detect-to-engage operations (hunt, neutralize and sweep) against mine threats using sensors and weapons deployed from the MCM Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV), an MH-60S multi-mission helicopter and associated support equipment.

The MCM mission package achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) on March 31, 2023, following rigorous initial operational testing and evaluation (IOT&E) of the full mission package, including the AN/AQS-20 system, during the fall of 2022 aboard USS Cincinnati (LCS 20). With the deployment of the first MCM mission packages in Fiscal Year 2025, the Navy will commence the process of divesting from aging MH-53 helicopters and Avenger Class MCM ships.

PEO Unmanned and Small Combatants leads the Navy’s efforts to provide littoral combat ships with mission-tailored capability to Combatant Commanders to provide assured access against littoral threats, leveraging unmanned naval capabilities for enhanced operational effectiveness.

CNO Franchetti: Navy Has a Lot to Offer Young People



WASHINGTON (April 16, 2024) Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti delivers testimony at the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense hearing on the fiscal year 2025 defense budget request in Washington D.C., April 16, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MCC Michael B. Zingaro)

April 24, 2024 | By C. Todd Lopez, DoD News

Recruiters across the military are challenged every day to bring young people into service. But the chief of naval operations said she thinks the Navy has what young people are looking for – if only they knew more about it.

“All the services are facing some challenges in recruiting,

and it's really broader than that," said Navy Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who spoke yesterday at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It's probably challenges in just propensity to serve, in general."

One challenge the Navy has in recruiting, Franchetti said, is that so many young people are simply unaware of what it does.

"If you don't live near a coast or you don't live near a base, you may not really know what your Navy does every day," she said. "So, talking a little bit about ... operations in the Red Sea, keeping commerce flowing having your Amazon box get to your doorstep, there's a lot of stuff that people don't even recognize every day that your Navy is out there doing."

Young people, part of Generation Z, are now of age to consider military service, and Franchetti said the Navy must consider what that generation values if they're going to be convinced to enlist in military service.

"Thinking about what they value, what they're looking for ... in terms of wanting to understand why, wanting to understand the values of the organization, I think we have a really good story to tell, because we're all about honor, courage, commitment, democracy ... and the pursuit of all who threaten it," she said. "But also, it's about helping them become the best version of themselves ... we offer a lot of opportunity, we have 150 different career specialties that they can go into."

[Spotlight: Taking Care of Our People](#)

The Navy offers careers in nuclear engineering, cyber and medical, for instance. And most recently, a new career field in robotics has opened up, she said. And every career field is available to both men and women.

"You can really work in any field that you want to, so you can

get some of your own skills, test out your own leadership abilities because we're all leaders in the Navy," Franchetti said. "I think those are good things for them to think about ... I'd really like to have our sailors sell themselves. That's the best way to do it."

If the Navy can convince young people to enlist, Franchetti said, it's equally important to ensure the Navy remains a place they want to stay, that they aren't going to be disappointed with their choice to enlist. The admiral said the Navy is doing a lot to retain service members.

"We are also focusing on a lot of things that we know some of the younger people are interested in: making sure that folks have access to internet, making sure they have access to the gym, making sure they have access to health care, good-paying compensation, making sure they have a place to live that isn't on the ship," she said. "... A good quality barracks room, good quality food ... that's some of the work that we're doing to make sure that we can be that world-class employer."

NOAA to Break Ground for New facility at Naval Station Newport



An illustration of the new NOAA marine operations center planned for Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island. (Image credit: Burns & McDonnell)

Apr. 24, 2024

NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations will hold a ceremony May 6 at Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island to break ground on a new facility that will serve as the future home of the NOAA Marine Operations Center-Atlantic. Four NOAA research vessels will be based at the new facility, which will also serve as the headquarters for NOAA's Atlantic fleet.

In December 2023, the U.S. Navy, on behalf of NOAA, [awarded](#) \$146,778,932 to Skanska USA, from New York, to build the new NOAA facility. Funded in part by the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), it will include a pier that will accommodate four large vessels, a floating dock for smaller vessels, space for vessel repairs and parking and a building to be used for shoreside support and as a warehouse.

NOAA's fleet of 15 research and survey ships are operated, managed and maintained by [NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations](#). Ranging from large oceanographic research vessels capable of exploring the world's deepest ocean, to smaller ships responsible for charting the shallow bays and inlets of the U.S. The fleet supports a wide range of marine activities,

including fisheries surveys, nautical charting and ocean and climate studies. NOAA ships are operated by NOAA Corps officers and civilian professional mariners.

Electric Boat Competition Sparks Interest in Naval Science Careers



23 April 2024

Student engineering teams from Princeton, Washington College and the University of Alabama have won first place in their respective events at the “Promoting Electric Propulsion” (PEP) boat races, sponsored by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE).

In just six years, this electric boat-building competition has grown from a single university to 34, with more than 200 students who took part in the five-mile races on Broad Bay in Virginia Beach. Dr. Steve Russell, program officer, Sea Warfare and Weapons department, said he launched the PEP competition with a colleague from ASNE, Dr. Leigh McCue, and Tim Cullis, Naval Sea Warfare Center Carderock, after seeing a public race by local hobbyists in the Chesapeake Bay.

“It gave us the idea this would be a good way for the Navy to get engineering students interested in electric propulsion, so we did it.”

Russell said they are reaching hundreds of science and engineering students every year. The PEP racing event not only offers students valuable learning experiences, it provides the Navy and Marines with a workforce for the future.

“The goal is to create a pipeline of graduating engineers who have worked on a suite of problems that are currently issues within the U.S. Navy. They come out of school after having designed and built a boat like this, and learning about high power electronics, propulsion, hull design, cooling and boat stability – the naval architecture parts of it,” Russell said. “So far, we’ve hired many of them into the warfare centers and our industry partners.”

The teams of college students come from universities all over the country. Some are very well known, like Princeton and Texas A&M, but others are much smaller and not necessarily easily recognized. That doesn’t mean the smaller universities aren’t as competitive. Russell said Washington College in Maryland came in first and second place, respectively, in the 2022 and 2023 manned race, as well as placing first in 2024.

“They don’t even have an engineering school. It’s just a group

of students who go to school near the Chesapeake Bay and they built a couple of very good boats,” he said.

The PEP competition includes manned and unmanned boat races. Russell said the manned competition seems to be more exciting for the students. It is a race, after all – and they can go pretty fast. Most of the entrants, though, register for the unmanned competition. Regardless of which category the teams fall into, they are all involved in meaningful and, in some cases, record-breaking work.

“While we’re not really looking to use any of the techniques that the students come up with, their innovation has been very impressive. For example, the Princeton team last fall took their boat down to a river in North Carolina and beat the world record for electric boat speed on the water with an average speed of 114 mph,” Russell said. “What we’re really trying to do is to get them interested in solving Navy-related problems, and hopefully they will pursue careers in the Navy.”

It’s also become something of an industry event where the students are introduced to industry partners in the area. Since its inception in 2018, the PEP competition has helped recruit 44 engineering graduates for the Navy. Eleven others gained engineering positions with industry partners.

For more information on PEP, visit their website at <https://www.navalengineers.org/Education/Promoting-Electric-Propulsion-PEP>