

BAE Systems awarded U.S. Navy contract to continue supporting Mobile Deployable C5ISR programs



MCLEAN, Va. – March 14, 2024 – The U.S. Navy has awarded BAE Systems a contract worth approximately \$86 million to continue supporting its Mobile Deployable Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Combat Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (MDC5ISR) programs.

The five-year contract from the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command's Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division Webster Outlying Field Special Communications Mission Solutions Division will involve the company providing engineering and technical services for new and legacy MDC5ISR systems and platforms.

"As a leading systems integrator, our team brings an unmatched level of expertise to the program," said Lisa Hand, Vice

President and General Manager, BAE Systems Integrated Defense Solutions. “We have provided quick reaction, integrated C5ISR solutions on this program for more than 35 years and we are proud to continue our support to warfighters deployed around the globe.”

This follow-on contract includes support for a variety of MDC5ISR products including small craft, transportable systems, en-route communication systems, and intra-platform systems for the U.S. Navy, Special Operations Forces, Homeland Security, and for other Department of Defense (DoD) and non-DoD agencies.

The company will perform work in Lexington Park, Maryland; St. Inigoes, Maryland; and Little Creek, Virginia.

March 13 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 13, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 13, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one anti-ship ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Gulf of Aden. The missile did not impact any vessels and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command then successfully engaged and destroyed four unmanned aerial systems (UAVs) and one surface-to-air missile in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

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

merchant vessels.

Navy Awards Bell Textron Contract for 12 AH-1Z Helicopters for Nigeria



KOREA STRAIT (March 29, 2023) An AH-1Z Viper helicopter takes off from the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), March 29, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chad J. Pulliam)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The government of Nigeria is slated to receive 12 AH-1Z Viper helicopter gunships, becoming the third foreign customer for the Viper.

In a March 12 contract announcement, the Naval Air Systems Command awarded to Bell Textron of Fort Worth, Texas, a \$455 million “firm-fixed-price, undefinitized contract for the production and delivery of 12 AH-1Z helicopters for the government of Nigeria, as well as provides associated engineering, program management and logistics support, and non-recurring engineering for obsolescence.”

Deliveries to the Nigerian government are expected to be complete by July 2028.

Bell built 189 AH-1Zs for the U.S. Marine Corps and 12 for Bahrain, and is building four for the Czech Republic, along with eight UH-1Y Venom utility helicopters. The Czech Republic also is receiving free of charge six AH-1Zs and two UH-1Ys that formerly were part of the U.S. Marine Corps’ inventory.

March 12 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 12, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 12, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one close-range ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon in the Red Sea. The missile did not impact the vessel and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command and a coalition vessel successfully engaged and destroyed two unmanned aerial systems (UAS) launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international

waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

Specialized Army Unit Underway to Support Humanitarian Aid Delivery to Gaza



March 12, 2024 | By Joseph Clark

The specialized Army unit tasked with establishing a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to deliver critical humanitarian assistance has wasted no time in making the complex operation a reality.

The first of several watercraft used to construct the pier and manned by troops from the 7th Transportation Brigade began the weekslong transit from the unit's homeport in Virginia to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility less than two days after President Joe Biden called on the military to conduct the emergency operation during his State of the Union Address.

Today, four more Army vessels set sail from Joint Base Langley-Eustis to join the operation: USAVs Monterrey, Matamoros, SP4 James A. Loux and Wilson Wharf.

The brigade, a component of the XVIII Airborne Corps, is the Army's premier watercraft unit specializing in Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS.

JLOTS systems can jointly employ Army and Navy logistics assets to deliver critical supplies to troops or civilians in austere environments anywhere in the world.

"This is Army watercraft's moment, and we're up for it," said Army Col. Samuel S. Miller, the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) commander.

"The U.S. and the world will see our humanitarian capability on display and in action forward," he said. "The 7th TB(X) is highly trained, mobile, versatile and capable to operate in these types of environments."

Delivering the capability involves the complex choreography of logistics support and landing craft vessels that carry the equipment used to construct an approximately 1,800-foot causeway comprised of modular sections linked together known as a Trident Pier.

Once in theater, the unit will begin construction of the causeway off the coast of Gaza enabling the flow of critical aid from the sea to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict. The capability is expected to be operational in

approximately 60 days.

Deploying on short notice anywhere throughout the globe is par for course for the units that comprise the XVIII Airborne Corps, said Army Brig. Gen. John B. Hinson, the corps' assistant commanding general for support.

"We are the contingency corps for the Army," Hinson said. "We have units, divisions, brigade combat teams, separate brigades, that can deploy anywhere in the world for any type of contingency operation in 18 hours.

"The 7th TB(X) is one of these units that falls in that category where all of their units are very deployable for an immediate response force for different types of contingencies all around the world," he said.

Once operational, the pier will be capable of delivering up to 2,000,000 humanitarian aid meals per day.

Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder previewed the capability Friday during a briefing at the Pentagon following Biden's State of the Union Address.

"This is part of a full-court press by the United States to not only focus on working on opening up and expanding routes via land, which are the optimal way to get aid into Gaza but also by conducting air drops," Ryder said.

The U.S. has conducted several humanitarian assistance airdrops into Gaza alongside the Royal Jordanian Air Force. The combined operations have delivered hundreds of thousands of badly needed meals to civilians.

Biden said more aid is needed.

Ryder stressed that the JL0TS capability enables the U.S. to continue delivering aid without putting boots on the ground in Gaza.

“We’ll be working with partners in the region to be on the receiving end of , but at no time will we require U.S. forces to actually go on the ground,” he said. “Our role will be essentially to provide the service of getting to the causeway, at which point it will then be distributed.”

Miller said the unit’s extensive training in environments throughout the world has prepared its soldiers to accomplish the mission in Gaza.

JLOTS was last used operationally to deliver humanitarian assistance following the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010.

Soldiers from the 7th TB(X) train extensively in deploying the capability around the globe, including off the coast of Australia last summer in support of Exercise Talisman Sabre, a large-scale joint defense exercise between Australia and the United States.

[Experience: Talisman Sabre](#)

“We understand the importance of this mission, and the interests of the world in this regard,” Miller said. “When it may seem, at times, we have the weight of the world on our shoulders, we will forge across the water to deliver humanitarian assistance.”

That same determination was echoed throughout the ranks.

“We like what we do,” said Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Benjamin Tate, the chief engineer on one of the vessels that set sail for Gaza today.

“We’re extremely proud that we get to participate in humanitarian relief,” Tate said. “Me personally, if my family was in that situation, I’d want somebody to be willing to help. So, when we were told that was the task, our guys are ramping the boat up and getting ready.”

Navy 2025 Budget Requests Only 6 Battle Force Ships



NAVAL STATION NORFOLK – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) prepares to moor pierside during the boat's homecoming at Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 15, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's fiscal 2025 budget request proposes only six battle force ships, which, combined with planned ship retirements, would reduce the size of the battle force from 296 ships to 287 ships.

The Navy's proposed \$257.6 billion budget – which officials

said prioritizes readiness over procurement, would include \$32.4 billion for ship construction. Those funds would procure one Block VI Virginia-class attack submarine (SSN), two Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, one Constellation-class guided-missile frigate, one Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship (LPD), and one medium landing ship.

The proposal for only one Virginia-class SSN, rather than two, was made out of concern for the submarine industrial base, which currently is delivering only 1.3 hulls instead of the desired two SSNs per year. The gap is designed to help realign the investments in the submarine industrial base. Under the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP), the Navy expects to return to the procurement rate of two SSNs per year in fiscal 2026. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said advance procurement for the SSNs is proceeding to “set up the program for long-term success.”

The ship construction budget also includes continued incremental funding for two aircraft carriers and second Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine, the refueling and comprehensive overhaul of a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, the service-life extension of three aircushion landing craft, and the purchase of two used commercial ships for use as sealift ships.

The procurement of the San Antonio-class LPD would mark a reversal from the 2024 plan to end procurement of the class. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said the Navy is intent on growing the large- and medium amphibious warfare ship fleet to a minimum of 31 ships.

The FYDP features the procurement start in fiscal 2027 of a new class of ship, the light replenishment oiler (T-AOL).

Raven said the Navy currently has 88 ships under contract,

with 66 of those under construction.

Planned ship retirements include two Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers (Shiloh and Lake Erie); two Independence-class littoral combat ships (Jackson and Montgomery), one Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship (Germantown); one Montford Point-class expeditionary transfer dock ship (John Glenn) and the four oldest Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transports (Spearhead, Choctaw County, Millinocket, and Fall River).

Rep. Rob Wittman, R- Virginia, a member of the Seapower subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized the ship construction plan as too little.

“The president is once again proposing to shrink the Navy by reducing the Navy force structure from 296 ships in FY24 to just 287 in FY25. By only building six ships, President Biden is also threatening to devastate our naval fleet and the Hampton Roads industrial base by slowing aircraft carrier construction and failing to meet the two Virginia-class submarines per year cadence required to support the AUKUS security pact,” Wittman said in a March 11 statement.

U.S. Army Assault Helicopters Conduct Deck Landings on USNS DAHL

[By Grady T. Fontana](#)

11 March 2024

JINHAE, South Korea – Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 2nd

Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (2-2 CAB) conducted deck landings with U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters on prepositioning ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), March 7.

Six aircraft crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB practiced single-spot deck landings onboard USNS Dahl, about five miles off the coast of Jinhae, South Korea, to certify air crew members and pilots in landing on a ship.

The DLQs were conducted through coordination between Military Sealift Command Office-Korea, USNS Dahl, and crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB to qualify or reset their crew on single-spot DLQ currency.

The training environment was also an opportunity for Army aircrews to ensure maritime air movement capability and readiness.

As a secondary training objective, MSCO-K and USNS Dahl aimed to further develop interoperability and joint relationship with 2-2 CAB during ship flight operations.

This training event for the Army also proved to be equally valuable to the crew of USNS Dahl. While mariners' conduct regular training on ship flight operations, the training environment is usually limited to classroom or computer simulations, which can sometimes not accurately reflect the challenges the crew may face at sea.

In preparation for the event, Dahl conducted a complete inventory and inspection of all flight deck equipment that included testing of all flight deck systems. In addition, Dahl conducted simulated flight deck operations, helicopter crash and fire drills in the days before the operation.

"All flight deck operations are inherently dangerous but DLQs

add the wild card of potentially novice crews who are not familiar with either the vessel or ship flight operations in general,” said contracted mariner Capt. Deatra Thompson, ship’s master, USNS Dahl. “Additionally, unlike many USNS vessels, Dahl does not conduct flight operations often and many of the crew, while having received training and simulated operation, some have never been involved in real-life flight operations.”

To reduce danger, Dahl requested that the aircraft’s crew chief depart during the train-the-trainer initial landings to provide hands-on instruction to the Dahl Chock and Chain teams to ensure they were familiar with the methods and placement of the fastening equipment.

The event was executed safely and without incident and resulted in six single-spot deck-landing qualified crews across 2-2 CAB.

“This event demonstrated effective joint coordination and was a great chance for MSC0-K and USNS Dahl to support a valuable training opportunity for our U.S. Army partners stationed here in Korea,” said Cmdr. Patrick J. Moore, commanding officer, MSC0-K. “Overall, there was great collaboration between MSC0-K, USNS Dahl, and the soldiers of 2-2 CAB.”

Maritime prepositioning ship USNS Dahl is a Watson-class large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship and is part of Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3.

Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3 supports warfighters from all the U.S. Armed Forces by prepositioning Military Sealift Command ships throughout the Indo-Pacific Region, ensuring Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps vehicles, heavy equipment, personnel and supplies are strategically positioned to support the full range of military operations.

Commander, Military Sealift Command Far East ensures approximately 50 ships in the Indo-Pacific Region, are manned, trained and equipped to deliver essential supplies, fuel, cargo, and equipment to warfighters, both at sea and on shore.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and Reserve military personnel.

March 11 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 11, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 8:50 a.m. and 12:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 11, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of into the Red Sea toward merchant vessel Pinocchio, a Singaporean-owned, Liberian-flagged ship. The missiles did not impact the vessel and there were no injuries or damage reported.

Between 2:50-11:30 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 11, United States Central Command conducted six self-defense strikes destroying an unmanned underwater vessel and 18 anti-ship missiles in Houthi controlled areas of Yemen. It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and

merchant vessels.

USS Annapolis Visits Perth, Australia, in AUKUS Event



ROCKINGHAM, Australia (March 10, 2024) The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Annapolis (SSN 760) pulls alongside Diamantina Pier at Fleet Base West in Rockingham, Western Australia, March 10, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaitlyn E. Eads)
March 10, 2024

USS Annapolis (SSN 760) arrived in HMAS Stirling in Perth, Western Australia Sunday.

This marks the second visit by a U.S. fast-attack submarine to

HMAS Stirling since the announcement of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway in March 2023. The Optimal Pathway is designed to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

“Historically, we’ve had allied SSNs visit Australian ports for many decades totaling more than 1,800 days,” said Rear Adm. Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability at the Australian Submarine Agency. “Starting with USS North Carolina (SSN 777) last August, these visits are taking on a more important meaning for the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Submarine Agency as we build the infrastructure, knowledge, and stewardship needed to establish SRF-West in 2027.”

Increasing the number of SSN visits to Australia and the establishment of SRF-W comprise the first of three Optimal Pathway phases. As early as 2027, the United States will begin rotational presence in the Western Australia facility as a way to grow the RAN’s ability to operate and maintain a fleet of SSNs. Ultimately, there will be up to four U.S. Virginia-class submarines and one United Kingdom Astute-class submarine at HMAS Stirling.

The second phase of the Optimal Pathway begins in the early 2030s, with the United States selling Australia three Virginia-class submarines, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed. Phase Three sees the combination of a base British submarine design and advanced United States technology to deliver SSN-AUKUS, the future attack submarine for both Australia and the United Kingdom. Australia plans to deliver the first Australian-built SSN-AUKUS in the early 2040s.

“Having our submarines rotating through HMAS Stirling is critical to building Australia’s sovereign capability to safely and competently operate SSNs,” shared Rear Adm. Lincoln Reifsteck, the U.S. AUKUS Pillar One Program Manager. “Each visit will build upon the previous one and allow the RAN team

to grow its capabilities. This visit will see Australians take a more active role in the execution of a voyage repair period.”

“For decades, the U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Navy have trained and operated together,” said Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, Commander, Submarine Group (CSG) 7. “AUKUS is a natural extension of our already close relationship, building unprecedented capability and interoperability that will pay dividends for generations.”

“It’s an honor to be here and the team looks forward to working with the Australians and furthering our relationship,” said Cmdr. James Tuthill, Commanding Officer, USS Annapolis. “The enthusiasm and professionalism of the HMAS Stirling team is apparent, and we look forward to making this visit as productive as possible.”

Initially announced in September 2021, the AUKUS trilateral agreement is a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of the three nations that also promotes stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under Pillar I of AUKUS via the Optimal Pathway announced by the heads of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023.

UPDATE: US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red

Sea Area



USCENTCOM, March 9, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Following further engagements through the morning, U.S. and Coalition forces downed a total of at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles between 4:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 9.

No U.S. or Coalition Navy vessels were damaged in the attack and there were also no reports by commercial ships of damage.

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area

March 9, 2024

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area Between 4 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists conducted a large-scale uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) attack into the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. CENTCOM and coalition forces identified the one-way attack (OWA) UAVs and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels, U.S. Navy, and coalition ships in the region. U.S. Navy vessels and aircraft along with multiple coalition navy

ships and aircraft shot down 15 OWA UAVs. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure.

March 8 Red Sea Update

TAMPA, Fla. - At approximately 9:50 a.m. (Sanaa time), United States Central Command conducted a self-defense strike against two Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists' truck-mounted anti-ship missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. At approximately 3:55 p.m. (Sanaa time), Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen into the Gulf of Aden at M/V Propel Fortune, a Singapore-flagged, owned, and operated vessel. The missiles did not impact the vessel. There were no injuries or damages reported. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.