

# Navy Launches Design Efforts for Modernize VLF System for C-130 Aircraft



A Lockheed EC-130Q Hercules, which previously handled the Navy's TACAMO work. The Navy has now decided to acquire the C-130J-30 Super Hercules as its platform for communicating with deployed ballistic-missile submarines. *WIKIPEDIA / Alain Rioux*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded a developmental design contract to an aerospace company for very low frequency communications systems modernization for integration into C-130 aircraft.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded Collins Aerospace of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a \$48.3 million contract for “developmental design and risk reduction engineering efforts for airborne very low frequency systems modernization in support of Airborne Strategic Command, Control, and

Communications Program Office (PMA-271) program capability requirements," according to a Feb. 22 Defense Department contract announcement.

The VLF system would be installed on C-130 aircraft, which is planned by the Navy to assume the TACAMO strategic communications role from the E-6B Mercury aircraft.

The communications role called TACAMO by the Navy – a term meaning "Take Charge and Move Out" – has been performed for three decades by the E-6 Mercury, a variant of the Boeing 707 airliner. After the Cold War, the Airborne National Command Post role previously performed by Air Force EC-135 "Looking Glass" aircraft was incorporated into the E-6 with the installation of the Airborne Launch Control System, combining the TACAMO and ALCS in one platform.

The Navy has performed the TACAMO mission since 1963, beginning with four C-130G (later EC-130G) Hercules aircraft, later augmented by eight newer EC-130Q Hercules. The E-6 replaced the EC-130s, giving the two TACAMO squadrons, VQ-3 and VQ-4, a faster, quieter, more comfortable platform for the long missions.

The TACAMO aircraft are equipped with a long trailing-wire antenna used to relay very low frequency radio messages to submerged ballistic-missile submarines. The airframes go through considerable stress as they maintain high angle of bank for prolonged periods to maintain tight orbits to wind the trailing-wire antenna into a vertical position, needed for the radio waves to penetrate the water most effectively.

A request for information issued Dec. 18, 2020, by PMA-271 announced the Navy "intends to negotiate and award sole-source contracts to Lockheed Martin Corporation, Marietta, [Georgia], for the efforts associated with the procurement of up to three C-130J-30 "Stretch" green airframes in [fiscal 2022/2023] for testing and analysis.

The C-130J is the current, much more modern version of the C-130 and is flown by the Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, as well as many foreign air forces. The C-130J-30 is similar but has a 15-foot-longer fuselage. The rugged C-130J is able to operate from many more airfields than the current E-6B Mercury.

“Specifically, this contract provides non-recurring engineering effort to address size, weight, and power cooling in the components, systems, subsystems, or weapons replaceable assembly, model-based systems engineering development, weight reduction analysis, cyber security risk assessment and logistics analysis,” the announcement said.

The contract work is expected to be completed in March 2024.

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## **Navy Decommissions Coastal Patrol Ship USS Firebolt**



Sailors assigned to the coastal patrol ship USS Firebolt (PC 10) salute during the ship's decommissioning ceremony, Feb. 23 at Naval Support Activity Bahrain. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Mark Thomas Mahmud BAHRAIN* – The crewmembers of Cyclone-class coastal patrol ship USS Firebolt (PC 10) marked the end of the ship's U.S. Navy service during a decommissioning ceremony Feb. 23 at Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

The nearly 27-year-old ship was one of 10 patrol craft currently forward-deployed to the Middle East in support of regional maritime security operations. Firebolt commissioned in June 1995 and began conducting routine coastal patrol operations under U.S. 5th Fleet in 2003.

"The crew is what makes Firebolt special to me," said Senior Chief Engineman Paul Dixon, who completed two tours aboard Firebolt. "The history behind Firebolt makes everything we do more meaningful."

Prior to operating from Bahrain, the ship helped secure New York City's harbor immediately following the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. Months later, Firebolt conducted coastal patrols in the Arabian Gulf during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In 2004, two Firebolt Sailors and a Coast Guardsman were killed as Firebolt provided security for the Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal in the Northern Arabian Gulf. After spotting a suspicious vessel, Firebolt deployed a rigid-hull inflatable boat and the suspicious vessel exploded in an apparent suicide attack.

"We thank the hundreds who served on this great ship and honor the brave Sailors and Coast Guardsman killed in the 2004 terrorist attack at sea. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces.

Firebolt has conducted several major rescue operations during its storied service. In 2005, the ship's crew rescued 89 people off the coast of Somalia after their boat sank. Additionally, Firebolt rescued an Iranian mariner from a capsized fishing vessel in 2012.

"We have so many memories here," said Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Pedro Benitez. "We would be here working late hours in engineering, but still smiling and joking. It's stuff like that that's irreplaceable."

During the decommissioning ceremony, Lt. Cmdr. Raymond W. Miller, Firebolt's commanding officer, expressed appreciation for his team.

"They've proven their dedication to mission success over and over again," said Miller. "They've never let me or each other

down.”

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## CNO Is ‘Sighted on a Bigger, More Capable Navy’



Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday speaks with ROTC members during WEST 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Cmdr. Courtney Hillson*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Addressing the topic of future force structure after it submerged again into the depths of analysis, the Navy’s top officer laid out his views for a “bigger, more capable Navy” in the future informed by a series of exercises over the last year, estimating a requirement for

a fleet of more than 500 manned and unmanned ships, including 12 aircraft carriers.

“We’re going through another force-structure assessment right now, based on the hard work we’ve done over the last five or years in really thinking about how we would fight differently in terms of in a distributed fashion, across a wide, vast ocean like the Pacific, in terms of integrating all domains simultaneously,” said Adm. Michael Gilday, speaking Feb. 18 at the West 2022 Symposium sponsored in San Diego by the U.S. Naval Institute and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association.

“In thinking about what the future fleet looks like, we spent time taking a look at a couple of different force structures assessments in 2019 and 2020,” the CNO said. “The one that I base my best advice on is the one that we finished up in 2020 that we did along with the Marine Corps, but it was actually led by OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense]. I found that to be an important stakeholder in that process because this wasn’t just Marine Corps-speak or Navy speak or Department of the Navy-speak, but it was more broadly supported by OSD.

“Based on that [and] large-scale exercises like we did last summer – leveraging live virtual construct [LVC]– based on the integrated battle problem we just did over in 5th Fleet with some 100 unmanned platforms over the past few weeks, I’ve concluded, constant with the analysis, we need a naval force of over 500 ships,” he said.

Gilday said his view on carrier aviation “remains unchanged. I think we need 12 carriers.”

The CNO also said “we need a strong amphibious force to include probably nine big-deck amphibs and another 19-20 [medium amphibious warfare ships] to support them [and] perhaps 30 or more smaller amphibious ships to leverage maritime littoral regiments – and the punch that they’re going

to provide in places close inside the fight – to 60 destroyers and probably 50 frigates; 70 attack submarines; a dozen ballistic-missile submarines; to about 100 support ships. And probably, looking to the future, 150 unmanned [vessels].

“We’re doing a lot of work inside the FYDP [future years defense plan] now. I think it speaks out to the vulnerabilities that we hear called out by the Joint Staff and the chairman in his risk assessment,” Gilday said. “So, in the long term, I’m sighted on a bigger, more capable Navy. We’re working our way through that with respect to budgets but certainly not taking our eye off the ball with respect to requirements. We do think differently because the future is now in terms of bringing more capability out of the force that we have.”

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## **U.S. Navy Reestablishes Submarine Squadron 8**



Capt. Brian Hogan, commodore, Submarine Squadron 8, renders a salute to sideboys as he departs his command's reestablishment ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk, Friday, Feb. 18. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner*  
NORFOLK – The U.S. Navy reestablished Commander, Submarine Squadron (COMSUBRON) 8 during an official ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, on Friday, Feb. 18, commander, Submarine Force Atlantic said in a release.

COMSUBRON 8's reestablishment is intended to distribute and align the responsibility for command and control of submarines assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron 6, also based in Norfolk, during the submarines' sustainment phase and maintenance shipyard periods.

COMSUBRON 8 was initially disestablished in a ceremony on April 28, 2011, and the squadron's original roles and responsibilities were merged with COMSUBRON 6.

This move returns the control of new submarine construction and ongoing submarine operating maintenance schedules of Los Angeles-class attack submarines and Virginia-class submarines homeported in Norfolk to COMSUBRON 8.

COMSUBRON 6 retains the operational responsibility of preparing Norfolk-based submarine crews in all facets of operations, to include tactical and operational readiness for war, inspection and monitoring duties, nuclear and radiological safety, and the development and control of submarine operating schedules and logistical support coordination of all submarine operations in the Virginia Capes operating areas.

Vice Adm. William Houston, commander, Submarine Forces, was the keynote speaker for the establishment ceremony.

“Normally we have a change of command which can be upsetting as it means someone is moving on, but this ceremony is nothing but good news as we are reestablishing a squadron,” said Houston. “The reestablishment will give us a squadron that can concentrate on maintenance and new construction and that skillset, while we have another squadron that is focused on operational units.”

Capt. Brian Hogan took command of submarines previously under COMSUBRON 6, relieving Capt. Jason Pittman, commodore, COMSUBRON 6, of responsibility of new submarine construction and ongoing submarine operating maintenance schedules.

“I would first like to congratulate Brian on assuming command of Submarine Squadron 8,” said Pittman. “He brings to the team a wealth of invaluable experience and I cannot think of anyone more right for the job than him. It is an important day for the entire submarine force and the entire Navy. We are building a dedicated team that will lean in and learn new and innovative ways to build and repair our submarines.”

After assuming command of COMSUBRON 8, Hogan gave remarks on reestablishing the squadron.

“Submarine Squadron 8 was established back in the 1940s, so we are simply restoring Submarine Force normalcy by reestablishing it here today,” said Hogan. “This time around, Squadron 8 is focused on shipyard readiness. It is difficult to transition a submarine and its crew into the shipyard and back out as the boat and crew both transform themselves for operational readiness. It is important we get these transitions right, and it is now our job to do it successfully.”

COMSUBRON 8 will step in to provide administrative, manning, logistical, training, operational planning and readiness support for Los Angeles-class attack and Virginia-class fast attack submarine during periods of maintenance and improvement.

Fast-attack submarines are multi-mission platforms enabling five of the six Navy maritime strategy core capabilities – sea control, power projection, forward presence, maritime security and deterrence. They are designed to excel in anti-submarine warfare, anti-ship warfare, strike warfare, special operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, irregular warfare and mine warfare. Fast-attack submarines project power ashore with special operations forces and Tomahawk cruise missiles in the prevention or preparation of regional crises.

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# Mississippi, Maine Delegations Urge Support for Destroyers in Navy's Next Budget



The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) makes a brief stop for logistics in Singapore Feb. 18. Lawmakers from Mississippi and Maine would like to see three more destroyers of the class included in the fiscal 2023 defense budget. *U.S. NAVY / Leslie Hull-Ryde*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sens. Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Representatives Steven Palazzo and Trent Kelly, all

Republicans from Mississippi, joined lawmakers from the Maine congressional delegation in a letter urging Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro to include funding for three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers in the fiscal 2023 budget, Wicker's office said in a release.

"As you work to finalize the Department of the Navy's [fiscal] 2023 budget, we write to respectfully request support for a robust shipbuilding budget, and to include the procurement of three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers," began the lawmakers. "We urge the Navy to develop a multi-year procurement program of 15 destroyers which maximizes the procured number of ships under the contract, with the understanding that if adequately funded, the industrial base can support at least three ships per year."

The lawmakers highlighted the importance of Arleigh Burke-class ships to national defense – including their value in countering the growing threat of China – and the impact of the shipbuilding efforts on Mississippi and Maine communities. These ships are currently built at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi and Bath Iron Works in Maine.

"Furthermore, to address the growing threat of China and its increasing fleet size, hedge against a belligerent Russia and assure allies, we urge you to mature and submit the department's acquisition plan for the next large surface combatant," continued the lawmakers. "A strategy closely tied to the industrial base and with extensive oversight will help prevent the issues of cost increases, program delays and end-product reliability issues seen in other ship classes.

"These issues are imperative to maintaining our National Defense Strategy and advantage in the maritime commons, and sustaining our military-industrial base," the lawmakers concluded.

In addition to the Mississippi lawmakers, the letter was

signed by U.S. Sens. Angus King (I-Maine), and Susan Collins (R-Maine), and Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, both Democrats.

The Mississippi and Maine congressional delegations have long championed funding for both Ingalls Shipbuilding and Bath Iron Works. In the recent 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, the lawmakers secured authorization of \$3 billion for the procurement of two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers at Ingalls Shipbuilding. Last month, Wicker, Hyde-Smith and Palazzo joined Del Toro at Ingalls Shipbuilding, where the secretary toured the facilities and saw the importance of the work being done at the shipyard.

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## **Navy's CMV-22B Achieves Initial Operational Capability Designation**



Senior military leadership cross the flight deck to depart Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), Feb. 9. Vinson is currently conducting routine maritime operations in U.S. 3rd Fleet. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Megan Alexander*

The Navy announced initial operational capability for the CMV-22B Osprey, confirming the platform's operational readiness following the successful completion of its first deployment on Feb. 17, Naval Air Systems Command said Feb. 18.

The aircraft was formally declared IOC on Dec. 14, 2021, aligning with the scheduled first-quarter fiscal year requirement.

"The CMV-22's maiden deployment with Carrier Air Wing [CVW] Two and the [USS Carl] Vinson [CVN 70] team is an operational success, giving me the confidence necessary to make the declaration," said Rear Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. "As we continue to deliver the advanced platforms that will make up the Air Wing of the Future, the CMV-22B

provides the necessary support and more to carry our future force.”

Loiselle’s designation marks a key milestone in the design, development, acquisition and testing of the CMV-22B and confirms its relevance and readiness to meet the needs of the Navy’s carrier onboard delivery mission. The aircraft transports personnel, mail, supplies and cargo from shore bases to aircraft carriers at sea, and will eventually replace the C-2A Greyhound.

“IOC designation is more than a stamp of approval,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Brian Taylor, V-22 Joint program manager. “It is a vote of confidence from top Navy leadership that the design, testing and production of this aircraft meet the logistical needs of the carrier air wings designated to fly the CMV-22B.”

This past summer marked the first deployment for the CMV-22B. Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30 embarked on the USS Carl Vinson alongside the F-35C Lightning II and E-2D Advanced Hawkeye squadrons. The first deployed detachment has executed a mission completion rate of 98% and a mission-capable rate of 75%. The CMV-22B is a crucial element of future carrier airwings due to the cargo capacity needed to transport F-35 power modules and additional logistics support for future carrier air wing deployments with next-generation platforms.

“This aircraft went from first flight to first deployment in 19 months, a feat possible through the dedication of the Navy’s acquisition, engineering, test and operational communities, as well as industry, all working in tandem, toward a common goal,” said Taylor.

With 50% more internal fuel than the Marine Corps’ Osprey variant, CMV-22B can transport up to 6,000 pounds of cargo and personnel over a 1,150 nautical mile range. The Navy

redesigned the forward sponson fuel tanks and added two wing fuel tanks to add capacity and extend the flight range.

“As our fighter/attack and surveillance aircraft expand in both capability and size to extend the range of the carrier air wing, we must also evolve our support aircraft, in tandem, to supply those platforms. The CMV-22B will transport cargo and personnel to outfit the most advanced aircraft carrier strike groups as we continue to meet the needs of our missions worldwide,” said Taylor.

The program will continue to refine and test capabilities on the aircraft, addressing the agile needs of the fleet. To date, Bell Boeing has delivered 14 aircraft with 44 on contract and full operational capability expected in 2023.

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## **U.S. Pacific Fleet Will Leverage Knowledge, Expertise of Naval Postgraduate School With New Nimitz Research Group**



The Naval Postgraduate School and U.S. Pacific Fleet announced the establishment of the Nimitz Research Group on Feb. 16. Under the aegis of NPS' Naval Warfare Studies Institute, the new organization will leverage NPS' interdisciplinary education and research capabilities and institutional knowledge in new ways to meet the needs and emerging challenges of the Pacific Fleet. *U.S. NAVY*

MONTEREY, Calif. – The Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, California, and Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet are joining forces to harness educational and research knowledge and expertise specifically as it pertains to the Indo-Pacific region with a new effort, the Nimitz Research Group.

Nimitz Research Group will fall under NPS' Naval Warfare Studies Institute, which will provide NPS faculty and students who will “serve as an extension of the PACFLT staff in Hawaii by participating in fleet exercises and events and providing additional research capacity and subject matter expertise,” according to an Naval Postgraduate School press release.

The Nimitz Research Group was launched Feb. 16 by the NPS president, retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, and Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

“The establishment of the Nimitz Research Group marks a

further evolution in our outstanding partnership with the U.S. Pacific Fleet,” said Rondeau. “We have always seen NPS as a center of excellence and innovation, a place where our faculty and students work together to solve the operational challenges of our fleet and force. Through the Nimitz Research Group, we will be able to provide those solutions by deploying our talent and our experience in direct support of our Pacific Fleet partners.”

According to NPS spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Ed Early, the Nimitz Research Group is modeled after Naval Warfare Studies Institute’s Bucklew Research Group, which already provides similar support to Naval Special Warfare. Early said the Navy SEAL officers who are Bucklew scholars attending NPS on a two-year master’s degree program serve as an extension of Naval Special Warfare Group commands, who in turn benefit from the SEALs’ education, research efforts, interactions with the academic community, and proximity to Silicon Valley.

“The example set by the Bucklew Research Group proved to be an ideal model for PACFLT’s requirements.,” Early said. “As a result, the Nimitz Research Group was conceived with the goal of providing coherence and unity of action for NPS’ support to PACFLT.”

Paparo, himself a graduate of NPS’ Systems Analysis program, wanted to leverage the Bucklew Research Group model to focus the unique capabilities of Naval Postgraduate School faculty members as well as the operational experience of NPS’ 2,500 mid-career officers, senior noncommissioned officers and civilians to support the commander of Pacific Fleet’s priorities and research needs.

“The Nimitz Research Group links the intellectual rigor of NPS, its key location in the nation’s hub of technical innovation and the expertise of innovative warfighters in the Pacific Fleet to research, develop and implement new and dynamic combat capabilities,” said Paparo. “Together we will

build critical advantages over our competitors to maximize our strengths – battlespace awareness, agility, maneuverability and collective capabilities of the joint forces.”

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## U.S., U.K. Navy Chiefs Meet, Discuss Cooperation and Interoperability



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, left middle, meets with Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff of the United Kingdom. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sean Castellano*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday met with his U.K. counterpart, Royal Navy First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff Adm. Sir Ben Key, at the Pentagon, Feb. 15, the CNO’s public affairs office said in a release.

During the meeting, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepen cooperation and discussed a wide range of issues including strategic competition, interoperability, capabilities and innovation.

“Today’s global challenges and security environment emphasize the importance of partnerships and interoperability,” said Gilday. “Our enduring and strong partnership with the United Kingdom helps us to ensure security, stability and prosperity.”

This meeting marked the first between the First Sea Lord and CNO and was emblematic of the strong partnership between the two countries. Discussions were substantive and productive.

Gilday and Key exchanged views about security issues in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific, underscoring the importance of the U.S.-U.K. bilateral relationship and defense cooperation, as well as NATO alliance.

“I am delighted to be in Washington to see my U.S. counterparts. As the Chief of Naval Operations has said, our two navies share an incredible bond, which was most amply demonstrated last year with the many miles we sailed together on the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment,” said Key. “We train, exercise and operate together because of our shared outlook, our shared values and our shared desire for peace and prosperity across the globe.”

“The strength of our alliances and partnerships has never been more important and will continue to be imperative to take on the challenges of the 21st century,” said Gilday. “I look forward to the continued cooperation between our two countries and our two navies.”

The two leaders emphasized their navies shared commitment to uphold and advance the rules-based international system.

The U.S. and Royal Navy operate together around the globe regularly. Most recently, USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) took part in a six-month deployment as part of Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG21) with HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08). Both navies also conducted multilateral naval training with Australia and Japan during Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) 2021 in October.

Key took office in November. The Navy Chiefs spoke via video conference on Key's first day in office.

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## **Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group Returns Home for Valentine's Day**



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70)

returns to its homeport of Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego. The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group returned to San Diego after an eight-month deployment to U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleets in support of regional stability and a free and open Indo-Pacific. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kevin Johnson*

SAN DIEGO – The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group returned to San Diego on Feb. 14, Valentine’s Day, marking the end of an eight-month deployment to U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleets areas of operation, said U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet Public Affairs.

After an accelerated departure from San Diego, the Carl Vinson CSG supported integrated operations in the Hawaiian Islands operating area with the U.S. Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard as part of the Defense Department’s ongoing presence in the Indo-Pacific region. They continued into the western Pacific demonstrating U.S. commitment to partnerships and alliances in the region while upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific.

“The tireless dedication and professionalism of our Sailors, through a global pandemic, challenging operational tempo, and sacrificed time away from family, is truly humbling,” said Capt. P. Scott Miller, commanding officer of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), the strike group’s flagship. “Their efforts have demonstrated flexibility and resiliency and ensured mission success in every task. They have directly supported a free and open Indo-Pacific and have underscored our Navy’s readiness, strength, and lethality.”

Ships in the Carl Vinson CSG sailed more than 80,000 nautical miles while underway for 262 days, conducted dual carrier operations and multinational exercises, including maritime security operations, integrated training between surface and air units, long-range maritime strike, anti-submarine warfare, information warfare operations, maritime interdiction operations, personnel recovery, air defense operations,

multiple ship navigation and formation maneuvering and refueling-at-sea operations. While deployed, the strike group operated in some of the most heavily navigated waters of the Indo-Pacific including the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea.

Carl Vinson is the first aircraft carrier to deploy with a combination of fourth- and fifth-generation platforms within Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2 that predominantly represent the "Air Wing of the Future," including the F-35C Lightning IIs of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147, the CMV-22B Ospreys of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30, the F/A-18E/F Super Hornets of VFAs 2, 113, and 192, the EA-18G Growlers of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 136, the E-2D Advanced Hawkeyes of Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 113, the MH-60R Sea Hawks of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 78, and the MH-60S Sea Hawks of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 4. The complete Air Wing of the Future will also include the MQ-25 Stingray unmanned aircraft system, which is planned to be incorporated into carrier air wings in 2025.

During the deployment, the air wing executed more than 15,000 fixed-wing and helicopter flight hours comprising of 7,791 sorties, 7,702 launches and 7,761 aircraft arrestments.

The strike group successfully completed operations and exercises alongside multiple partners and allies including navies from Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom as well as the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Notable multinational, bilateral, and U.S.-only exercises included Large Scale Exercise 2021 in August, Operation Malabar and Maritime Partnership Exercise 2021 in October, Annual Exercise 2021 in November, U.S. and Australia's bilateral exercise in December and Expeditionary Strike Force and dual carrier operations in January 2022.

“Alongside our partners and allies, we have aggressively pursued every opportunity to elevate our combat readiness in a drive to continue upholding regional stability,” said Rear Adm. Dan Martin, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 1. “We’ve been doing this for 75 years and I’m proud to say that our team has relentlessly paid tribute to this legacy with many long hours of sweat and determination that started well before we left San Diego.”

The Carl Vinson CSG consists of Carl Vinson, embarked staffs of CSG 1, CVW-2 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 1; nine embarked air wing squadrons; guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain (CG 57); and DESRON 1 guided-missile destroyers USS Chafee (DDG 90), USS O’Kane (DDG 77), USS Stockdale (DDG 106), and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112).

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## **Navy to Deliver Next- Generation Ship-to-Shore Connectors to Assault Craft Unit**



The next generation landing craft, ship-to-shore connector, landing craft, air cushion (LCAC), successfully completed well

deck interoperability testing with USS Carter Hall (LSD 50) and demonstrated the craft are another step closer to fleet integration. *NSWC PANAMA CITY / Ron Newsome*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy is set to deliver the first two operational next-generation landing craft, air cushion 110-class ship-to-shore connectors on Feb. 11 to an assault craft unit in Little Creek, Virginia, Navy officials said.

The two SSCs are on board the dock landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50) inside the ship's well deck en route to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia, after having completed well deck interoperability testing in Panama City, Florida. The two craft will be delivered to ACU-4, which has long operated the SSC's predecessor, the LCAC 01 class, said Thomas Rivers, executive director, Amphibious, Auxiliary and Sealift Ships, Program Executive Office-Ships, speaking Feb. 10 at the National Defense Industrial Association's Expeditionary Warfare Conference.

Four LCAC 100s have been delivered to the Navy so far, with delivery of three or four more expected in 2022, said Capt. Scot Searles, program manager, Amphibious Assault and Connectors Programs, PEO-Ships, also speaking at the conference. A total of 24 are on contract, with 12 under construction.

Rivers said initial operational capability of the LCAC 100 class will be reached when the ACU is equipped with six craft.

Capt. Kevin Lane, the Navy's resource sponsor for Amphibious Warfare, also speaking at the conference, said IOC is expected in 2023, with first deployment of the craft expected in 2024.

The deck operability testing "was conducted as part of the first phase of ship interface testing and helped validate user requirements by performing multiple well deck entries and exits from USS Carter Hall," said Team Ships Public Affairs in a release. "LCACs are built with similar configurations,

dimensions, and clearances to the legacy LCAC – ensuring the compatibility with existing well deck equipped amphibious ships.”

“The success of the well deck testing and other recent evolutions validates these modernized craft will be a game changer for the Navy-Marine Corps team as they execute various missions in the maritime domain,” Searles said.

The test event, a collaboration between, PEO Ships, USS Carter Hall, Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division and other stakeholders, was the culmination of months of preparation. The testing also has historical significance, as Panama City is the location of the Navy’s Air Cushion Vehicle Center of Excellence with the first-ever well deck operations occurring off Panama City in 1985 between legacy LCAC 01 and USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41).