Navy Accepts Delivery of Future USS Billings

MARINETTE, Wis. – The Navy accepted delivery of the future littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) during a ceremony at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine (FMM), shipyard, Marinette, Wisconsin, Feb. 1, the Naval Sea Systems Command said in a Feb. 4 release.

The future USS Billings is the 17th littoral combat ship (LCS) to be delivered to the Navy and the eighth of the Freedom variant to join the fleet. Delivery marks the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder, part of a Lockheed Martin-led team, to the Navy. It is the final milestone prior to commissioning, which is planned for later this year.

“Today marks a significant milestone in the life of the future USS Billings,” said Capt. Mike Taylor, LCS program manager. “I look forward to celebrating the commissioning of this fine ship alongside the crew later this year, where she will play an essential role in the new fleet of warships that will carry out our nation’s future maritime strategy.”

Several additional Freedom-variant ships are under construction at FMM. The future USS Indianapolis (LCS 17) is preparing for trials this summer. The future USS St. Louis (LCS 19) was christened and launched in December. The future ships Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), Cooperstown (LCS 23), Marinette (LCS 25), Nantucket (LCS 27) and Beloit (LCS 29) are also in various stages of production, with yet-to-be-named LCS 31 awarded last month.

LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable ship designed to support focused mine countermeasures, antisubmarine warfare and surface warfare missions.

The LCS class consists of two variants, the Freedom variant

and the Independence variant, designed and built by two industry teams. The Lockheed Martin-led team builds the odd-numbered hulls. The Independence variant team is led by Austal USA, Mobile, Alabama, (for LCS 6 and the subsequent even-numbered hulls).

LCS is now the second-largest surface ship class in the U.S. Navy. In 2018, five LCSs were delivered to the fleet, and three are scheduled for delivery in 2019.

HII Awarded $15.2 Billion Block Contract For Two Ford-Class Aircraft Carriers

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – For the first time in more than three decades, Huntington Ingalls Industries' (HII's) Newport News Shipbuilding division was awarded a multi-ship contract from the U.S. Navy to build two aircraft carriers. The company announced on Jan. 31 that it received a contract modification valued at $15.2 billion for the detail design and construction of the Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers Enterprise (CVN 80) and CVN 81, which has not yet been named.

The Navy's decision to partner with HII to create the best acquisition approach will save more than $4 billion across the program.

"Today's announcement is a triumphant step toward returning to a 12-ship aircraft carrier fleet and building the 355-ship Navy our nation needs," said Jennifer Boykin, president of Newport Shipbuilding. "Most importantly for us, it provides stability into the year 2032 for our workforce and for our

supplier businesses across the United States."

The construction of Enterprise, which began in 2017, and CVN 81 will be completed at the company's Newport News Shipbuilding division. The ships are scheduled to be delivered in 2028 and 2032, respectively.

Buying two aircraft carriers will stimulate Newport News' aircraft carrier supplier base of more than 2,000 suppliers in 46 states, allowing businesses to phase in work more efficiently. These benefits will help accelerate production, enabling the company to build aircraft carriers every three to four years.

To support the contract, the company is making investment in facilities and will continue its digital transformation efforts.

"This contract award is something we should celebrate, and it is also something we should never take for granted," Boykin said. "We have the responsibility to leverage the investments we are making in our workforce, the facility and in digital shipbuilding to become smarter, better, stronger. It is more important than ever that we execute efficiently and transform our business operations so that we leave a lasting legacy of our own."

The strategy comes as a result of extensive collaboration with the Navy to reduce cost and drive efficiencies. The approach is not new, however. The Navy achieved substantial cost savings in 1980s when it used the procurement strategy to purchase the Nimitz-class aircraft carriers USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and USS George Washington (CVN 73). The four ships were built by Newport News.

This contract modification comes after previous contract awards for the advance procurement and advance fabrication of Enterprise, starting in May 2016.

“History has its eyes on Newport News Shipbuilding, and today is a great reminder that we are all part of something much greater than ourselves,” Boykin said. “I could not be more proud of our shipbuilders and excited for our future.”

Vigor Selects Vancouver, Washington, Site for a State-of-the-art, All-Aluminum Fabrication Facility

PORTLAND, Ore. – Vigor has entered an agreement to take over the former home of Christensen Yachts in Vancouver, Washington, following a search for the best location to build the U.S. Army’s new landing craft, Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) or MSV(L), the company announced in a Feb. 1 release. The MSV(L) contract represents the largest award in Vigor’s history, with a total value of nearly $1 billion over 10 years and hundreds of family-wage jobs.

Vigor expects to eventually employ approximately 400 workers at the site and will be investing millions in capital upgrades and equipment.

In addition to the Army landing craft production, other programs to be constructed at the site will include ongoing production of the Combatant Craft Medium (CCM) for the U.S. Navy as well as for U.S. allies, the Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) for the U.S. Coast Guard and export market, Vigor’ Fast Interceptor, aluminum fast ferries and commercial workboats. Vigor’s aluminum marine work is currently performed primarily in Seattle (Ballard), Washington, and Clackamas, Oregon.

Aluminum marine work in these locations will phase out as work is moved to the Vancouver site over the coming year.

Vigor looked in both Oregon and Washington state at building and buying options for this facility. Local, state and federal leaders in both states showed support throughout the process, demonstrating their commitment to the economic benefits and jobs created by strong manufacturing and maritime sectors in the Pacific Northwest.

“Vigor’s decision to keep and grow jobs in Washington state is a testament to the great quality of life and workforce we have available here,” said Gov. Jay Inslee. “Our team worked intently with Vigor to find a competitive solution to keep these jobs in Washington, and I’m glad to see the continued success of one of our great corporate citizens contributing to our economy by creating living wage jobs in Vancouver.”

The Vancouver site was selected for a number of factors. The opportunity to bring its entire aluminum fabrication team together in one location was a primary driver, coupled with the livability of the community, its proximity to existing Vigor facilities and the suitability of the Christensen facility for Vigor’s production needs.

“The synergies we will achieve by bringing these amazing builders together in one location strengthens our competitive advantage and builds upon our long-term goals as an outstanding industrial company,” said Frank Foti, Vigor president and CEO. “While we’ve had operations in Vancouver since 1980, this move represents a substantial increase in the number of Vigor employees who will be living and working here. Our Vigor team looks forward to getting to know the Vancouver community better and being a force for good through our remarkable people and the economic activity associated with our work.”

The approximate timeline is to begin production at the

facility in May with existing work followed by the beginning of construction of the MSV(L) prototype in the summer. Once the MSV(L) prototype is completed and testing and refinements have occurred, the schedule calls for four vessels in the Low-Rate Production phase, followed by 32 vessels once Full Rate Production is underway.

Keel Laid for Future Destroyer USS Carl M. Levin

BATH, Maine – The keel of the future USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120) was ceremoniously laid at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) shipyard, Feb.1, the company said in a release of the same date.

Speakers at the ceremony included Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King; Navy Secretary Richard Spencer; the ship's namesake, former Sen. Carl Levin; and Reps. Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden.

Sen. Levin and the ship's sponsors, his three daughters, Kate Levin Markel, Erica Levin and Laura Levin, authenticated the keel by etching their initials into the keel plate to symbolically recognize the joining of modular components and the ceremonial beginning of the ship.

"We are honored to be celebrating this milestone with Sen. Levin, Mrs. Levin, their daughters and so many distinguished guests," said Capt. Casey Moton, DDG 51 class program manager, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. "This has been a special occasion to lay the keel for our Nation's 70th Arleigh Burke destroyer, and to do so with a namesake that shares the same sense of purpose and commitment to service as our Sailors."

The ship’s namesake served in the U.S. Senate for 36 years from 1979-2015. As the longest serving senator in Michigan state history, Levin became a staunch supporter of the armed services through his work and leadership as chairman and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

DDG 120 will be built in the Flight IIA configuration with the Aegis Baseline 9 Combat System, which includes Integrated Air and Missile Defense capability. This system delivers quick reaction time, high firepower and increased electronic countermeasures capability for anti-air warfare. Delivery to the fleet is planned for fiscal 2021.

These multimission surface combatants serve as integral assets in global maritime security, engaging in air, undersea, surface, strike and ballistic missile defense, as well as providing increased capabilities in antisubmarine warfare, command and control, and antisurface warfare.

In addition to Carl M. Levin (DDG 120), BIW has four additional Arleigh Burke class destroyers under construction – Daniel Inouye (DDG 118), John Basilone (DDG 122), Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) and Patrick Gallagher (DDG 127), as well as the Zumwalt class destroyer Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002). BIW is under contract for an additional six Arleigh Burke class destroyers that will all be constructed in the Flight III configuration with enhanced air and missile defense capabilities.

CNO: ‘More Sporty Security

Environment' Will Affect Next Force-Structure Assessment

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy's top officer said that a forthcoming force structure assessment will reflect the guidance of the National Defense Strategy, the changing security environment and emerging technology.

"The security environment has only gotten more sporty, so we'll take that into account," said Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations, speaking Feb. 1 to reporters in the Pentagon, referring to the emergence of increased and sometimes aggressive naval activity in recent years by the Russian and Chinese naval and air forces.

Richardson also said that "technology is starting to come into play, so what counts as a naval platform is going to be an interesting discussion in this new force structure assessment. We want to make sure we are moving forward in a very evidence-based way, so that we're not counting on something that hasn't been relatively proven when it comes to the security of the nation, but we also want to make sure we're moving fast."

Increased agility in operations and more rapid development of technology are themes that Richardson has emphasized in recent public addresses.

Although the CNO did not discuss further what counts as a naval platform, the issue is likely to come forth as the Navy develops large and medium unmanned surface vessels as part of its Future Surface Combatant fleet. Unmanned underwater vehicles such as the Orca and Snakehead may also blur the definition of a platform and hence what counts as a ship to be counted in the fleet.

"We're on a path to grow the Navy," he said. "The last force structure assessment was done about 18 months ago, put out

this 355-ship number. There is structure within that 355, so sometimes people don't recognize that. … That 355 number really came about by a number of studies that were conducted inside the Department [of the Navy] and outside the department. They consistently advocated for a stronger naval force, more naval power. The all converged into something in the mid-to-upper 300s in terms of numbers of platforms."

The 355-ship Navy was codified by the Congress in the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. The Navy determined its goal of 355 ships in a force structure assessment released in December 2016.

Richardson said the new force structure assessment report is due later this year.

"We'll see where that goes," he said. "We'll get a new number. We may hold to it, we may not. The analysis is in process."

Navy Begins Competition for New Training Helicopter

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has issued a request for proposals (RFP) for new training helicopters to replace its fleet of TH-57 Sea Ranger helicopters in the Navy's aviation training command.

The Naval Air Systems Command posted the RFP on Jan. 28 for the TH-XX program, designed to produce a new helicopter to succeed the TH-57B/C in rotary-wing training, including training in Instrument Flight Rules.

The Navy began using the TH-57A helicopter in 1981 to train

rotary-wing pilots for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and some foreign militaries. The helicopters were later upgraded to the TH-57B form primary training and TH-57C version for advanced and instrument training. Three helicopter training squadrons of Training Air Wing Five at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida – HT-8, HT-18 and HT-28 – train student aviators in 41 TH-57Bs and 72 TH-57Cs.

The Navy expects to use the new helicopter and associated ground-based training systems to train at least 600 rotary-wing and tilt-rotor aviators per year, a number expected to increase through 2040. More than 50 percent of naval aviators are rotary-wing and tilt-rotor pilots.

The TH-XX helicopter will be one component of the Advanced Helicopter Training System, which also will include a Ground-Based Training System and contractor logistics and maintenance support.

The RFP announcement on the FedBizOps website states that the Navy expects the full and open competition to result in a single firm fixed-price contract for a total of 130 commercially derived aircraft through the base contract award and up to four options.

Three helicopter manufacturers are expected to submit proposals. Bell is expected to propose its Model 407GXi – a twin engine helicopter – and its single-engine Model 429. Airbus is expected to offer its model H135, a twin-engine helicopter, while Agusta-Westland is expected to propose its single-engine TH-119.

The proposals are due to Naval Air Systems Command by April 2. The Navy expects to award a contract in the first quarter of fiscal 2020.

Navy Orders 79 Net-Enabled Harpoons from Boeing

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has exercised a contract option to order 79 Block II+ kits for Harpoon cruise missiles, the Defense Department said in a Jan. 30 release.

The $16 million order by the Naval Air Systems Command comprises the second production order of Block II+ kits for the air-launched AGM-84 Harpoon, which is deployed on the F/A-18 strike fighter and P-3 and P-8 maritime patrol aircraft. The order follows a batch of 15 kits delivered in 2018.

The Block II+ version of the Harpoon is a net-enabled weapon that can receive target updates via data link to more refine the missile's radar acquisition. Jim Bryan, director of Cruise Missile Systems for Boeing Missile and Weapon Systems, in a Jan. 16 conversation at the Surface Navy Association symposium, said a Block II+ kit runs in the range of a couple hundred thousand dollars, much cheaper than delivering a new missile.

The Block II+ kits are being delivered to Naval Air Systems Command for air-launched weapons. Bryan said Boeing stands ready to build kits for the surface-launched and submarine-launched versions of the Harpoon should the Navy determine a requirement.

The Harpoon is now fielded by more than 30 nations. The Block II, version which is not net-enabled, is marketed to international customers. Bryan said Boeing has the largest order backlog in the Harpoon program's history and will be meeting demand by expanding its manufacturing facilities.

Navy Secretary Names Independence-Variant LCS After Capital of Maine

Washington – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer announced on Jan. 31 that the next Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship will be named USS Augusta (LCS 34), his public affairs officer said in a release.

The future USS Augusta (LCS 34) is named in honor of the capital city of Maine and is the sixth vessel to bear the name Augusta.

"It is an honor to name the next Independence variant LCS after the city Augusta," Spencer said. "From the earliest days of the American Revolution to every conflict since, the citizens of Maine have been an important part of the Navy and Marine Corps team. I am pleased that a future ship will carry on that tradition of service by bearing the name and history of their great capital city."

The future USS Augusta will be built by Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. This ship will be 419 feet long with a beam length of 104 feet and be capable of operating at speeds in excess of 40 knots.

The Navy has accepted delivery of 17 littoral combat ships (LCSs). Including the recent contract modifications, a total of 35 LCSs have been procured with 11 ships under construction (LCS 17, 19-26) and seven more ships in pre-construction ships (LCS 29-32, 34, 36 and 38).

The LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable ship,

designed to support focused mine countermeasures, antisubmarine warfare and surface warfare missions. LCS integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission capability from deep water to the littorals.

HII Division Delivers First 3-D Metal Part for Installation on Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' (HII's) Newport News Shipbuilding division has achieved a milestone in the integration of additive manufacturing into the design and fabrication of components for nuclear-powered warships. The company has delivered the first 3-D-printed metal part to the U.S. Navy for installation on an aircraft carrier.

The milestone was recognized during a brief ceremony Jan. 29 at Naval Station Norfolk. The part was presented to Rear Adm. Lorin Selby, Naval Sea Systems Command's chief engineer and deputy commander for ship design, integration, and naval engineering. The part – a piping assembly – will be installed on the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and evaluated for a one-year period.

"We are pleased to have worked so closely with our Navy partners to get to the point where the first 3-D metal part will be installed on an aircraft carrier," said Charles Southall, Newport News' vice president of engineering and design. "The advancement of additive manufacturing will help

revolutionize naval engineering and shipbuilding. It also is a significant step forward in our digital transformation of shipbuilding processes to increase efficiency, safety and affordability. This is an accomplishment we all should be proud of."

NAVSEA last year approved the technical standards for 3-D printing after extensive collaboration with the company and industry partners that involved the rigorous printing of test parts and materials, extensive development of an engineered test program, and publishing of the results. The highly digitized process could lead to cost savings and reduced production schedules for naval ships.

Navy Awards Vigor Drydocking Contract for LCS USS Coronado

PORTLAND, Ore. – The U.S. Navy has awarded the contract to execute the Drydocking Selected Restricted Availability (DSRA) for USS Coronado (LCS 4) to Vigor, the company said in a Jan. 29 release. Work will be performed at Vigor's Portland shipyard.

The award is the latest in a series of awards in Vigor's growing Navy repair program and is its first as prime contractor in the littoral combat ship program. Other recent Vigor projects with the U.S. Navy include the execution of the SRA for the USS Kidd at the Everett Naval Station and the DSRA for the USS Sampson in Vigor's Seattle facility.

Ship repair and service life extension in the defense sector has been a growth area for Vigor's Pacific Northwest shipyards. The company recently promoted Mike Pearson, Navy

veteran and former general manager at Vigor to vice president of Navy and Puget Sound Repair.

“Mike has delivered outstanding results in building the strong teams and processes that continue to improve our competitive position in complex Navy programs,” said Adam Beck, Vigor executive vice president of Ship Repair. “His efforts, together with Vigor’s great team of skilled craftspeople, are proving the Pacific Northwest has a strong role to play in maintaining the fleet readiness of today’s Navy.”

Vigor will begin work on the Coronado in March and run through November. The work package includes engine and machinery overhauls, underwater hull coatings, life-cycle inspections, and implementation of multiple ship alterations and upgrades to increase the Coronado’s warfighting readiness. The package also includes multiple upgrades directed at increasing the overall quality of life for deployed service men and women.

“This award is a testament to the significant capabilities of all Vigor employees and its valued sub-contractors,” said Kellan Lancaster, business development, Ship Repair. “We look forward to providing exceptional service and an on-time delivery.”