LCS Mission Modules Progressing Toward Operational Capability

ARLINGTON, Va. – The various mission modules for the three mission packages designed for the Navy's littoral combat ship (LCS) are progressing through their testing milestones toward their initial operational capability (IOC), a Navy official said.

"This is really a good time to be in mission modules," Capt. Ted Zobel, the Navy's mission module program manager, said Jan. 15 at the Surface Navy Association annual symposium, noting that two years ago progress was less impressive.

Zobel is in charge of development of mission modules for three mission packages currently in development for the LCS: Surface Warfare (SUW) Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and Mine Countermeasures (MCM).

He said that the Surface-to-Surface Mission Module of the SUW package – a launcher that fires the Hellfire Longbow missile – has completed developmental test on USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) and USS Detroit (LCS 7) and is in operational test on Detroit. A total of 55 missiles have been fired to date with a greater than 91 percent hit rate. He showed a video of the missiles being fired from an LCS and successfully destroying a swarm of six high-speed targets.

Zobel said the Hellfire missiles countered the targets that were "pretty representative of an attack by FIAC (fast inshore attack craft)."

The SSMM will reach IOC in the second quarter of 2019 on USS Jackson (LCS 6).

The preproduction test article of the ASW package's Variable-Depth Sonar (VDS), delivered from Raytheon in November, is going through testing on board a ship at the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Test Center at Andros Island in the Bahamas. The VDS is scheduled for installation on USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) during the third quarter of 2019, with developmental test scheduled for August or September.

Zobel said the VDS "should be able to [reach] IOC in 2020."

With the COBRA (DVS-1 Coastal Battlefield Reconnaissance and Analysis) sensor reaching IOC last year, all three aviation mission modules of the MCM mission package are certified to deploy on an Independence-variant LCS. During fiscal 2019, the MCM package will be integrated on a Freedom-variant LCS, Fort Worth.

Zobel said the Knifefish MCM autonomous underwater vehicle went through integration testing on an Independence-variant LCS in December. The UISS (Unmanned Influence Sweeping System) was in its last week of integration testing and is on track for developmental test and operational test by 2021. The full MCM package is slated to reach IOC in 2022.