Navy Shallow-Draft LCS Increases U.S. Access, Presence in Southeast Asia



The USS Montgomery steams in the Gulf of Thailand during an exercise as part of AUMX. The first AUMX, co-led by the U.S. and Royal Thai navies, includes maritime forces from the U.S. and all 10 ASEAN member states. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Greg Johnson

ARLINGTON, Va. – When the littoral combat ship (LCS) USS Montgomery (LCS 8) visited Davao City, a port on the Philippine island of Mindanao, earlier this summer, it was the first port call there of a U.S. Navy ship in who knows how long.

Speaking to reporters Sept. 11 in a media roundtable teleconference, Cmdr. Edward A. Rosso, commanding officer of the ship's Blue Crew, was making the point that the LCS, with its shallow draft, allows the Navy to make port calls in locations that would not accommodate larger vessels such as destroyers, cruisers and amphibious warfare ships.

The draft of the aluminum trimaran-hull, Independence-variant Montgomery is 15.1 feet, compared with the 30.5-foot draft of an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer.

"The U.S. Navy, along with our partners and allies, has long known the importance and value of working together, and from my perspective, that is exactly what Montgomery has done during this deployment," Rosso said. "We began our time in theater with a historic port visit to Davao City in the Philippines. It perfectly suited to receive our shallow-hull littoral combat ship. This was the first visit by a U.S. warship to that location in recent memory."

“It was a great opportunity to build relationships, learn from one another, improve interoperability, and appreciate culture,” he added. “Overall, port visits like this allow us to demonstrate our commitment to maritime security in the region while strengthening relationships with our friends, partners and allies.”

The Montgomery is the first rotational deployment to the Western Pacific of an LCS in 18 months and is the first of three LCSs the Navy plans to deploy this year.

The last LCS to deploy, USS Coronado (LCS 4), returned from the western Pacific on Dec. 5, 2017. It had been preceded by the USS Freedom (LCS 1) and its Freedom-class sister ship, USS Fort Worth (LCS 3), in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

During the deployment, Montgomery participated in the 25th annual CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) exercise and the ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise (AUMX).

“Co-led by the U.S. and Royal Thai navies, AUMX consisted of pre-sail activities in Thailand, Singapore and Brunei, followed by a sea phase in international waters of Southeast Asia, including the Gulf of Thailand and South China Sea,” a Navy release said. “It concluded in Singapore. Participating nations included Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States and Vietnam. AUMX included eight warships and four aircraft from seven countries, and more than one thousand personnel representing all ten ASEAN member states and the United States.”

The Montgomery deployed with the Surface Warfare Mission Package, including an MH-60S helicopter and an MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned aerial vehicle.

Rosso praised the value of the LCS Maintenance Support Team deployed to Singapore to support LCS deployments to the area. The team can stage to various ports in the region to rapidly

respond to maintenance needs of a deployed LCS. In one such response, the team made a major repair at Sattahip, Thailand.

He also praised his crew, of which he said, “The things on this ship wouldn’t have happened without my crew,” whom he called “100 people of excellence.”