Navy’s New LCAC Hits the Water

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. — The Navy’s newest ship-to-shore connector, the LCAC 100 (Landing Craft, Air Cushion 100), entered its first testing in the water April 10, a Textron official said, and is on path for delivery this summer.

In an April 11 interview with Seapower, Scott Allen, vice president of Marine Systems for Textron Marine and Land Systems in Slidell, Louisiana, said the underway test was an important milestone that brings the LCAC 100 class closer to service entry.

The lead craft in the new class, LCAC 100, will go through Builder’s Trials later in April and then will be prepared for the Navy’s acceptance trials, Allen said. The craft will be delivered to the Navy in the summer for further testing in at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Panama City, Florida.

The LCAC 100 class is being procured by the Navy to supplement and eventually replace the older LCAC class that has been in service for decades. The LCAC 100 has many features that improve operation and maintenance, especially through use of composite materials.

The new LCAC is driven by two Rolls-Royce MT7 engines, a derivative of the AE1107 that powers the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft. The MT7 provides 5,300 shaft horsepower as compared with 3,945 for the engine on the older LCAC.

Compared with the older LCAC, the new one features two gear boxes versus four and two lip bands versus four. The engine drive shafts, propulsor shrouds, variable-pitch propellers and impeller housings are all made of composite material, which reduces corrosion and, accordingly, maintenance.

The LCAC 100 is designed to operate with a crew of three versus the four on the older craft. It is designed to carry a 74-ton load, including an M1A1 tank with a mine plow attached.

So far, Textron is under contract to build nine LCAC 100s, 100 through 108. The latter eight currently are under construction at Textron’s facility in Slidell. LCAC 101 is scheduled to be delivered by the end of April. LCACs 101 through 108 will be the first to enter fleet service, with 101 through 106 used to establish initial operational capability.

Allen said Textron is preparing to respond by the end of April to the Navy’s request for proposals for follow-on production.

Japan is the only other nation that operates LCACs and is a possibility for a foreign sale of the new LCAC.