Newport News to Utilize Unique Schedule on JFK, New Cost-Saving Contract on Two More Carriers



The final piece of the underwater hull of the future aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy is lowered into place last year at Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding. Matt Hildreth/HII

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The combination of a two-ship purchase and investments in new technologies and facilities at the Newport News shipyard will enable the U.S. Navy to obtain future aircraft carriers with increased survivability and lethality at much lower cost, the carrier program manager said on May 6.

The future Gerald R. Ford class of nuclear-powered carriers will provide the increased capabilities needed in the era of "Great Power Competition" – and the two-ship contract will save an estimated $4 billion, program manager Capt. Philip Malone told a Naval Sea Systems Command briefing at the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space exposition here.

Malone is responsible for the next three of the Ford-class ships, CVN-79, the future John F. Kennedy, which is under construction, and CVNs 80 and 81, which will be produced under the dual-ship contract signed in January.

In addition to the $4 billion estimated savings from that contract, Malone said those two ships will benefit from the use of an integrated digital shipbuilding system Newport News is adopting and shipyard improvements that will allow major reductions in the man hours required.

CVNs 80 and 81 also will be built with greater survivability and lethality from an advanced radar, greater electrical power generation, integration of the fifth-generation F-35C Lighting II joint strike fighters and increased aircraft sortie rate over the legacy Nimitz class carriers, he said.

Malone said the Navy will acquire the Kennedy under a unique two-phase delivery, with the first phase providing a carrier that can test its aircraft launch and recovery systems and basic ship functions followed by a second phase that will install the advanced air surveillance radar and other combat systems. The unusual delivery process was necessary to have Kennedy operational in time to replace the Nimitz, which will hit its 50-year service life later this decade, he explained.

Malone cited Newport News' investments in the digital or 3D computerized shipbuilding process and in new facilities that will enable more ship components to be

produced out of the weather. Those improvements were made with monetary
incentives from the Navy and will sharply reduce the hours required to build
the ships, he said.