

Program Manager: Navy Examining Conventional Prompt Strike Capability for Zumwalt-Class Destroyer



The guided-missile destroyer USS Zumwalt, pierside in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during a port visit during routine operations in the eastern Pacific. U.S. Navy/Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Jonathan Jiang

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy’s program manager for the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer praised the capability being built into the ship as it transforms into an offensive surface strike platform from a land-attack ship, possibly to include a new missile strike capability.

The Zumwalt is being lauded “as the premier strike platform for the U.S. Navy,” said Capt. Kevin Smith, the Navy’s Zumwalt program manager, speaking Jan. 15 at the Surface Navy Association convention here, noting that the ship was “designed to be stealthy and designed to carry the fight to the enemy.”

Smith said the Navy is looking at the Zumwalt as a platform for a conventional prompt strike capability. He also said the Navy is looking at adding Tomahawk Block V – the Maritime Strike Tomahawk – to the Zumwalt’s arsenal. Under the current plan, the Block IV Tactical Tomahawk missile will be arming the Zumwalt.

Smith noted that the Zumwalt will be equipped with the Standard SM-6 Block 1A multipurpose missile, the Standard SM-2 missile and the SPY-3 radar.

He also said the two Advanced Gun Systems on the ship are

still in lay-up pending the development of a replacement projectile.

The current commanding officer of the USS Zumwalt, Capt. Drew Carlson, also spoke about the Zumwalt's at-sea periods in 2019, when the ship operated in the eastern Pacific and made port calls in Victoria, British Columbia; Ketchikan, Alaska; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; and San Francisco. The ship operated in Sea State 6 in the Gulf of Alaska.

"I'd rather be in heavy seas on this ship than on any other I have been on," Carlson said, noting that the ship now is 60% to 70% complete with hydrodynamic testing.

"This ship is very stable," he said, noting that experience should quiet the anxiety about the stability of the Zumwalt's tumblehome hull form.

Carlson said that some of the criticism of the Zumwalt is the constant comparison with the Arleigh Burke-class DDG. He said it is important to think of it as a new type of ship.

"Maybe DDG is not the right [term] for it," he said, musing that maybe it could be a cruiser or some other type. "It's not the Arleigh Burke destroyer."

Smith said the combat systems activation of the Zumwalt should be completed by March 2020 – pending concurrence of the chief of naval operations – and is scheduled to achieve initial operational capability in September 2021.

In 2020, the Zumwalt will be engaged in live-fire trials, operational concept development and tactical development.

He said the USS Michael Monsoor is 93% complete and will complete its combat systems availability during the second quarter of 2020. It will begin its combat systems activation sometime in 2020.

The third and final Zumwalt-class ship, USS Lyndon B. Johnson,

is at Bath Iron Works shipyard in Maine and is 90% complete with its hull, mechanical and electrical phase. Delivery to the Navy for its combat systems installation is scheduled for December.