

Ship Clips - May 31, 2011

A compilation of
articles concerning the Shipbuilding Industry

From the
Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus

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Tuesday, May 31th,
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Repairs on U.S. Amphib Ship Nearly Done

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Two Navy Ships

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LPD 17 Repairs
Nearly Complete Repairs on U.S. Amphib Ship Nearly Done

"We're getting back to where we should be," the captain of the long-troubled amphibious ship USS San Antonio (LPD 17) told reporters May 26. "I believe all the major repairs have been fixed." The San Antonio was pulled from service nearly two years ago in an effort to rectify problems that have plagued the ship since its delivery in August 2005. In that time, a Navy inspector general investigation delved into the causes of the problems.

Additional issues emerged during the repairs, including the discovery that the engines and main reduction gears were improperly installed, and the repair period was extended multiple times. Fixing the ship became a top priority for U.S. Fleet Forces Command and received the personal attention of its commander, Adm. John Harvey. Stuck in a shipyard, the San Antonio missed a scheduled deployment, and the fleet has had to adjust to the ship's absence.

"We were essentially a shore command for two years," Cmdr. Thomas Kait said during a press conference aboard the San Antonio after its return to Norfolk, Va., from 10 days of engineering trials.

"The engines ran beautifully," he said. "They did fantastic. It was truly incredible to feel the ship vibrate under her own power at sea." A second series of trials still lies ahead for the ship, followed by at least 10 months of training before it can deploy again, Kait said. "We look forward to going out again and driving the ship as she was meant to be."

The post-sea trials press conference was itself unusual and highlighted the Navy leadership's concern over the ship's performance. Reporters on the ship, however, were asked not to talk to crew members about the ship's condition or performance. A day earlier in Washington, some of the service's senior leaders were again grilled by Congress about why the ship was accepted from shipbuilder Northrop Grumman in 2005, despite knowledge of numerous construction deficiencies. "Were we obligated to take delivery of the early LPD 17s?" asked Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., at a Senate seapower subcommittee shipbuilding hearing.

"We were not compelled to take delivery," Sean Stackley, the Navy's top acquisition official, said. "There was a confluence of events," he admitted, responding to congressional questions on the program he and other officials have been asked dozens of times since 2005. "It was a conscious decision." All five of the first ships in the class had material problems to varying degrees; acknowledged Vice Adm. Kevin McCoy, head of the Naval Sea Systems Command, although problems with the more recent ships have been less severe than the first-of-class San Antonio.

Although more recent problems have been discovered on the ships, including grit in the lube oil system and poor welds, "all the other stuff greatly improved from the first" ship, McCoy said. "And, in fact, we had a highly successful final contract trial just earlier this spring on the New York that received lots of praise from" Navy inspectors.

McCoy noted that in the week prior to the hearing, all five ships of the class were at sea, including two on deployment. Pressed by Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., about a government inspector's assertion that the ships were not yet survivable in combat, McCoy declined to argue. "If you look at the issues that they identified, I don't take issue with the issues," he said. "We were in the middle of grit in lube oil in just about all our ships that we were dealing with, so there was a mobility issue."

But McCoy was hopeful that problem has been solved. "I'll knock on wood here," he said, but "I think that one's behind us."

(DEFENSE NEWS 30
MAY 11) ... Christopher P. Cavas

NASSCO Gets \$744
Million to Build Two Navy Ships

General Dynamics
NASSCO was today awarded \$744 million to build a pair of 765 foot auxiliary

ships for the Navy, an infusion of money that will reduce the company's need to lay off workers due to a long-term slump in construction orders. The Navy also said it might give NASSCO the contract to build a third Mobile Landing Platform (MLP) vessel as it moves ahead with a new class of ship that will be used to pre-position supplies. The "pier-at-sea" ship project could be worth \$1.3 billion to NASSCO, the last major shipbuilder on the West Coast.

The news comes

as a critical time for the San Diego shipyard, which employs 3,600 people, making it one of the county's largest defense contractors. NASSCO said earlier this spring it would eliminate up to 350 jobs due the decline in new construction and a delay in ship repair orders caused by Congressional debate over the federal budget. "There will still be some layoffs, but they will be significantly less than what we were talking about," said James Gill, a company spokesman.

NASSCO recently

laid the keel of the USNS Cesar Chavez, the 14th and final Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ship it is building for the Navy. The company has struggled to find contracts to replace that project, which was worth more than \$7 billion to NASSCO. But the defense budget was recently passed, allowing NASSCO to begin \$37 million in repair work on the frigates Curts and Vandegrift, and on the Pearl Harbor, a Navy dock landing ship.

NASSCO President

Fred Harris told the Union-Tribune in late April that "we'll be able to begin cutting steel immediately" if the company landed the MLP contract. The firm is preparing to do that, and expects to deliver the first of the new ships to the Navy in fiscal 2013 and the second in fiscal 2015. MLP represents a departure for the Navy, which is pursuing a "seabasing" plan that would allow the Navy and Marines to pre-position everything from tanks and ammunition to food on a ship that would operate like a pier. Dry cargo ships like that ones that have been built over the past decade at NASSCO would transfer supplies to the MLP, where they would be stored until they were need on shore. The MLP would be able to berth ships and handle helicopters, essentially giving the military a forward operating base located at sea. "The MLP ship would be capable of entering a harbor, but it wouldn't necessarily have to," Gill said.

(SAN DIEGO
UNION-TRIBUNE 28 MAY 11) ... Gary Robbins

After Major Cost Breach, DDG-1000 Team Moves On

Now about half-complete, the U.S. Navy's DDG-1000 Zumwalt-class destroyer is coming to grips with the various program and design changes required in the wake of last year's Nunn-McCurdy cost-growth breach.

The Navy believes that the suggested radar modifications ordered following the breach will meet ship requirements, and the service is working to award a contract for the work to Raytheon within weeks, Capt. James Downey tells Aviation Week.

As originally planned, the Zumwalt featured a spectrum of technological advancements, including a composite deckhouse, integrated propulsion system and an enhanced dual-band radar anchored by S-band and X-band sensors. But following the Nunn-McCurdy breach - precipitated by the truncation of the total buy to three from seven to allow for the purchase of more DDG-51s - the Navy eliminated the destroyer's S-band.

Raytheon put together a modification analysis to prove the modified radar still would deliver the desired S-band-like capability, Downey says. "We now agree with that and we've just started the award of the modifications," he says. "I expect that to be under way in a matter of weeks."

Another "modification" brought about by the Nunn-McCurdy breach was the deployment strategy for the Zumwalt. "They could go anywhere," Downey says. "The concept originally was basically a split between the coasts." With only three ships, though, the ship's home port will probably be on the West Coast, to be used principally in that theater. "The ship will progress to the West Coast and settle out in the San Diego area most likely," he says. It will be another half-decade or so before that happens. Now about 47% complete, "the ship delivers in 2014," Downey says. "But it is full of new technologies. It has another year to deliver the combat system. And, because it's a first [of class] ship, it's another year for operational testing for IOC [initial operational capability] in 2016. It's a 14, 15, 16 type of schedule." (See charts pp. 7-8)

Downey cites the propulsion system as one of those technological challenges. But the hardware is progressing well, he says. "We passed full-power test-up at Philadelphia on the 11th of May," he says. "We have those ship components up to full power. We loaded the port motor into the ship in less than two hours about two weeks ago."

At full power, the system can provide the ship with 78 megawatts of integrated power, which "basically means even at up to approximately 20 knots, 75% of that power is still available to do other things. That's a major attribute in this ship, to power the various mission systems."

But the key to this integration is the Raytheon control system software. The Navy just received the latest build of that software at its land-based site last week. "We have five of the six software releases for software complete," Downey says. It should take about two years to complete the sixth build software.

(AVIATION
WEEK 26 MAY 11) ... Michael Fabey

Newport News Shipyard Programs Fully Funded In House Defense Budget Bill

The U.S. House passed its version of the fiscal year 2012 defense authorization bill on Thursday, keeping intact all major shipbuilding programs at the Newport News shipyard. The bill, approved by a 322-96 vote, lays out plans to spend \$690 billion on defense next year, including \$14.9 billion on Navy shipbuilding programs.

Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc.'s Newport News yard is slated to receive \$554.8 million for the final year of advanced funding for the second aircraft carrier in the Gerald R. Ford class, the yet-unnamed CVN-79. The Navy is expected to issue a full construction contract for that ship in 2013. The bill also authorized \$529.7 million for advanced planning on the mid-life nuclear refueling and overhaul of the Abraham Lincoln carrier, which is due to arrive in Newport News for the three-year maintenance project in 2013.

House lawmakers supported spending \$4.8 billion on Virginia class submarines, which are built in a partnership between Newport News Shipbuilding and General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn.

The money will allow the Navy to continue to purchase two submarines per year in 2012. The bill authorizes \$3.2 billion for the two 2012 subs and \$1.5 billion for the purchase of materials for submarines that will start construction in 2013 and 2014.

Another major program that the Newport News yard may play a part in building, a replacement class of ballistic missile submarines, was authorized to receive \$1.1 billion in 2012 for advanced development and design. The boats would replace the aging Ohio class submarines, all of which were built by Electric Boat. Navy leadership and members of Congress have said Huntington is likely to share in the construction effort of the new boats because of the successful partnership between the two shipbuilders on the Virginia class.

Newport

News designers and engineers are supporting Electric Boat in the design of the subs, which the Navy plans to start building in 2019.

Before it becomes law, the Senate must first pass its version of the authorization bill and reconcile differences with the House. The authorization bill is preliminary budget legislation that does not appropriate any money. It essentially acts as a guideline for defense spending bills that are typically crafted months later.

(NEWPORT
NEWS DAILY PRESS 26 MAY 11) ... Peter Frost

A
Heavy Duty LCS for Foreign Navies. Maybe.

Lockheed Martin says its second littoral combat ship, the USS Fort Worth, is 87 percent complete. It'll start work on its third and fourth ships over the coming year. The U.S. Navy wants at least 55 LCSes. From the defense contractor's standpoint, Lockheed's return to shipbuilding looks like a success:

It is moving toward steady production of a stable design and will likely be able to book many hundreds of millions of dollars over the life of the program. (Lockheed's first LCS, the Freedom, didn't go so smoothly, and it cost much, much more than initially advertised.) From the Navy's standpoint, the LCS concept may not look so good anymore, given the murky prospects for the interchangeable mission equipment the sea service is counting on. But commanders at least seem satisfied that the ships work, and Lockheed officials would like to take that and translate it into a version for international navies. The ship that Lockheed could sell to the navy of Saudi Arabia or another foreign client might have many more features and weapons than the ones flying the Stars and Stripes.

Bob Riche, Lockheed's vice president for seaframe sea-based missile defense, said the company has looked at designing an LCS like the Fort Worth equipped with the Aegis system, including a SPY-1F radar and sets of vertical launch tubes for SM-2, SM-3, Evolved Sea Sparrow or other missiles. (Neither version of the standard U.S. LCS has any of that stuff.) Riche acknowledged that the additional sensors and weapons would require a lot more power, which would probably mean the Aegis-equipped LCS couldn't shred the ocean at 45 knots like its American counterpart. But a Saudi or other navy wanting a small air and missile defense frigate might not need the high sprint speed that U.S. Navy asked for. And the international LCS probably would not be able to accept the various mission modules built for the American one.

Although Stevens and Paul Lemmo, Lockheed's vice president of business development, both said the company was interested in foreign military sales on LCS, they also both acknowledged it would be years before it happens - if it ever does. Meanwhile the best way to entice foreign interest is for Lockheed and the U.S. Navy to keep on time and on budget with the Fort Worth and its siblings, Stevens said.

(DOD
BUZZ 24 MAY 11) ... Philip Ewing

Mothball Fleet Continues To Dwindle As Two More Ships Leave

Two more ships - the Clamp and the Bolster - were pulled free from the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet on Monday, Cheron Victoria Wicker, director of the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs of the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration said. The pair are Diver class auxiliary salvage and rescue ships built for the U.S. Navy toward the end of World War II, she said. They are the 22nd and 23rd ships to leave the bay since Department of Transportation officials announced Oct. 22, 2009, that the Obama administration wanted 57 obsolete ships removed from the site.

In the settlement of a three-year lawsuit filed by several environmental agencies, MARAD promised that 28 ships - those in the worst shape - would be gone by Sept. 30, 2012. The rest of the surplus vessels would leave by Sept. 30, 2017, according to the settlement. Twenty of the ships needed to be out of Suisun Bay by Sept. 30 for MARAD to maintain its timetable, Wicker said.

"The U.S. Maritime Administration is more than four months ahead of schedule in removing obsolete U.S. ships from the Reserve Fleet," she said. Both the Bolster and the Clamp were towed to dry-docks at BAE Systems, San Francisco, where they will be cleaned of marine growth and loose exterior paint, Wicker said. Afterward, they will be towed through the Panama Canal to Marine Metals Inc., a Texas company that will break the ships apart for recycling.

Marine Metals was awarded MARAD contracts after it bid \$1.85 million to recycle these two and the Sagamore and the Reclaimer, two ships that left the Reserve Fleet earlier this month. The Texas company beat out California Dry Dock Solutions, which operates on Mare Island.

California Dry Dock Solutions is the only West Coast MARAD-certified ship recycler.

Those leaving the state must be scrubbed of marine growth to prevent alien species contamination once the ship is towed into the Pacific Ocean. The Bolster, formerly the USS Bolster, with a classification number of ARS-38, was constructed by Basalt Rock Company's ship building division in Napa. It was launched Dec. 23, 1944.

The vessel primarily served in the Pacific and Far East, conducting salvage and towing operations from shortly after WWII through the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Bolster's assignments turned to ocean towing. It was decommissioned in 1994, when it was moored in Suisun Bay. The Clamp, formerly the USS Clamp, ARS 33, also was built by Basalt Rock Company's Napa shipbuilding division, and was launched Oct. 24, 1942. The Clamp's career was active, but much shorter than its sister ship. The Clamp was decommissioned in 1947, when it arrived at the reserve fleet in Suisun Bay.

(MARTINEZ
(CA) NEWS-GAZETTE 24 MAY 11) ... Donna Beth Weilenman