

Ship Clips - June 6, 2011

A compilation of
articles concerning the Shipbuilding Industry

From the
Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus

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Monday, June 6th,
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Works to Lay Off Up To 250 Designers

Navy to
Commission Guided Missile Destroyer William P. Lawrence

Lawmakers,
Military Agree 30-Year Hardware Budget Plans Are Flawed

Navy May
Need To Extend Lives of Attack Subs

Frigates Double Up In California Dry Dock

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DIEGO - The frigates Curts and Vandegrift are, this spring, quite literally brothers-in-arms. With money available for some long-awaited maintenance, the Navy decided to double up a shipyard period and get both hulls out of the water and into a dry dock for \$17 million in repairs and upkeep.

In April, the San Diego-based frigates were propped up in the dry dock at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard for what is planned to be a 17-week maintenance availability. The shipyard period is meant to get both hulls combat ready for at least one more deployment before the Navy decommissions the ships under its plan to retire its remaining 28 Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates by 2017.

Both ships went overseas last year on separate, independent deployments, with Vandegrift operating in 7th Fleet and Curts in 7th and 5th Fleet. So keeping a 30-year-old ship in tip-top shape is a challenge, even more so when high operational tempo leaves less time to get some deep maintenance and fixes done. Cmdr. David Rowland, who commands Curts, likened it to "when a car needs to go in for a tune-up."

While it had a shorter pier side availability in 2008, Curts hadn't been in dry dock since 2003. This spring, shipyard crews will examine and test its combat systems and do other repairs and checks. "It will breathe new life into the ship," said Rowland, speaking May 26 as the ship finished its fourth week in the yards.

Vandegrift will get some upgrades during the yard period, with some improved computer networks "that we use to talk to coalition navies and partners," said Cmdr. Brandon Bryan, who commands Vandegrift. Overall, "we are keeping the ship ready to fight."

While both ships have decommissioning dates ahead, it's not foremost on their crews' minds, the skippers said. "The mentality is: This ship has got at least one more deployment," Rowland said.

"We really don't even think about it," Bryan added. "We know it's out there." But "our job is the same as it would be if our ship was brand new."

The frigates remain capable when they deploy with their anti-submarine warfare suite and sub-hunting helicopters, "the core capability of the frigates in our modern Navy," Rowland said. Added Bryan:

"That's a capability not every ship has, a capability that is in very high demand." Rowland said frigate sailors are training to conduct visit, board, search and seizure missions, so they can support maritime missions as well as counterpiracy operations. With their small crews, frigates often are sought by sailors and junior officers wanting to learn a wide range of skills - and get the chance to earn qualifications and stay ahead of their peers in the fleet. "They just work hard every day, keeping their ship ready," Bryan said of the sailors.

(NAVY TIMES 04
JUN 11) ... Gidget Fuentes

Bath Iron Works To Lay Off Up To 250 Designers

BATH, Maine - Bath Iron Works has notified one of its unions that it plans to cut up to 250 jobs as design work slows down on the next-generation Zumwalt destroyer. The shipyard on Friday notified the Bath Marine Draftsmen's Association of the layoffs, to be effective on June 24. It follows the layoffs of 130 designers in January and 130 workers engaged in construction the next month.

Spokesman

Jim DeMartini says the shipyard has to balance its work force with the available workload in a period in which the Navy is buying fewer ships. Sen. Olympia Snowe says the Navy needs to build up its fleet. She says that as of May 31, the Navy claimed a force of just 285 ships, far below the 313-ship minimum established by the Navy. "Reports about the upcoming layoffs at BIW are disappointing, all the more so because it is the pride and professionalism of the BIW work force that underlies the well-earned reputation of Bath-built ships. Members of my staff and I are already preparing efforts in support of those who will lose their jobs. BIW is critical to maintaining the strength of our Navy, to equipping the fleet with the most advanced technologies available, and to fortifying our national security," Snowe said.

"I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress and the Navy to ensure that we provide the resources necessary to rebuild the size of our naval forces and maintain the workload at Bath Iron Works," she said.

(ASSOCIATED
PRESS 04 JUN 11)

Navy To Commission Guided Missile Destroyer William P. Lawrence

WASHINGTON -- The Navy will commission the newest Arleigh Burke class guided-missile destroyer, William P. Lawrence, Saturday, June 4, 2011, during an 11 a.m. CDT ceremony at Pier 2, Alabama State Docks, Mobile, Ala. Designated DDG 110, the new destroyer honors the late Vice Adm. William P. Lawrence. During the Vietnam War, as commanding officer of Fighter Squadron 143, Lawrence earned the Silver Star for a strike against a heavily defended target in North Vietnam. He completed his mission, but was captured after his aircraft went down in June 1967 and he remained a POW until March 1973. He earned the Distinguished Service Medal for his leadership to fellow POWs.

Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr., commander, U.S. Northern Command will deliver the ceremony's principal address. Diane Lawrence, widow of the ship's namesake and Vice Adm. Lawrence's daughters, Dr. Laurie Lawrence, and retired Navy Capt. Wendy Lawrence, will serve as sponsors of the ship.

William P. Lawrence, the 60th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, will be able to conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence and crisis management to sea control and power projection. William P. Lawrence will be capable of fighting air, surface and subsurface battles simultaneously and will contain myriad offensive and defensive weapons designed to support maritime warfare.

Cmdr. Thomas R. Williams II will become the first commanding officer of the ship. The 9,200-ton William P. Lawrence was built by Huntington Ingalls Industries in Pascagoula, Miss. The ship is 509 feet in length, has a waterline beam of 59 feet, and a navigational draft of 31 feet. Four gas turbine engines will power the ship to speeds in excess of 30 knots.

(NAVY NEWS SERVICE 01 JUN 11) ... Department of Defense

Lawmakers, Military Agree 30-Year Hardware Budget Plans Are Flawed

House members and senior military brass say the 30-year shipbuilding and aviation plans that Congress requires from the Pentagon are flawed. Lawmakers are "frustrated" that the Pentagon is not providing the long-term blueprints in time for Congress to review them as it devises annual military spending bills, Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) said Wednesday.

Congress mandated the Navy and Air Force submit the 30-year shipbuilding and aviation plans each year along with their annual budget requests. The idea was to give lawmakers and aides a full picture of when and how many ships and

aircraft the Navy and Air Force intended to buy. With that full view, lawmakers could make changes to avoid future problems such as platform shortfalls, industrial base atrophy and production gaps.

During a House Armed Services Oversight and Investigations subcommittee hearing, member after member echoed Wittman's frustration. The Virginian is chairman of the subcommittee.

"I'm afraid we've asked you to do the impossible," said Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.). "I'm not sure this helps Congress perform oversight. ... To ask anyone to come up with a 30-year window into anything is a recipe for embarrassment."

Vice Adm. Stephen Stanley, principal deputy director of the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation shop, agreed the 30-year plans are flawed. He told the subcommittee it is the "near years" that are the most important part of the long-term blueprints. Stanley proposed making the projections span only 20 years and requiring the Navy and Air Force to deliver them every four years, instead of annually. To Cooper, plans for hardware programs that span three decades are nothing more than "a pork preservative" that allows the military services and lawmakers to lock in pet projects.

Planning according to such long-range plans also hinders the military's "agility" in altering hardware projects when old threats fade or new ones emerge, Cooper said. Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) likewise expressed doubts about the usefulness of the shipbuilding and aviation plans. What's needed is a new planning process that "gets us closer to the truth," Forbes said. He also charged that delivering to Congress a long-term plan that says "we need to ramp up shipbuilding but we know we don't have the money" is nothing short of "deceiving the American people."

Several senior military officials who testified told the subcommittee that putting together 30-year plans for such a large swath of military programs is complicated work. The nation's political process injects its own hurdles, because a new administration must first fashion its national security and military strategies - both take up to a year or more - and then use that foundation to build its hardware plans, Stanley said.

Forbes, however, was not buying that. "Administrations change," the lawmaker said, "but our risks don't."

(THE HILL 01 JUN 11) ... John T. Bennett

Navy May Need To Extend Lives Of Attack Subs

A projected shortfall in the number of attack submarines may force the Navy to examine whether it can extend the lives of some subs and keep them in the fleet beyond their scheduled retirements, a top Navy admiral told Congress on Wednesday. Vice Adm. John Blake, the service's top requirements officer, acknowledged that the Navy's sub fleet will grow smaller than its own acceptable minimum, which could force it to look for ways to keep boats serving longer. But that may be difficult, cautioned a top naval analyst.

Shipbuilding expert Ron O'Rourke of the Congressional Research Service, appearing after Blake before a panel of the House Armed Services Committee, warned lawmakers that it may be hard to extend the service of the Navy's fast-attack subs because of limitations on the lives of their pressure hulls. The Navy keeps its nuclear submarines in excellent condition, but the ships were built to meet exact tolerances and specifications, and it may be more expensive than it's worth - or even impossible - to keep submarines sailing for much longer than their planned lives.

Blake told lawmakers the Navy's projections showed its submarine force dipping to as low as 39 boats - from 55 - and that that could warrant "looking at the inventory and seeing what the best of breed is," and the possibilities of service life extensions. If that's not feasible, commanders also could look into scheduling longer deployments for the Navy's existing submarines, so they'd spend more time at sea and as such be available for more missions.

Blake also said the Navy was considering trying to add another attack sub to its long-term plan for fiscal 2018, a decision he said would be made next year. The submarine shortfall, which has been a reality for some time as part of the Navy's long-term planning, is a microcosm of its larger shipbuilding situation: The service wants to grow its fleet to at least 313 ships overall, but congressional analysts say it would need billions more dollars than it's likely to get in order to buy enough ships.

Meanwhile, the existing fleet continues to operate at a high tempo: According to the Navy's daily operational update, 26 submarines were underway away from their homeports on Wednesday and 21 of them were on deployment - about a combined 86 percent of the fleet, according to the service.

(DOD BUZZ 01 JUN 11) ... Philip Ewing

Revised U.S. Fleet Plan Extends Some Ships To 70 Years

The U.S. Navy's two command ships,

each about 40 years old, are busy vessels. The Japan-based Blue Ridge, flagship of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, recently completed a cruise around the Far East and supported relief operations in Japan. The Mount Whitney, flagship of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, served as a headquarters ship for the initial coalition strikes in March against Libya.

The ships are at a stage in their service lives where the Navy normally might be expected to plan for replacements. But in a recent update to the 30-year shipbuilding plans, the ships have been extended to serve another 28 years - until 2039.

That would mean the Blue Ridge, launched in January 1969, will have spent more than 70 years in the water. The Mount Whitney is one year younger. A notional replacement ship, dubbed LCC(X) - or sometimes JCC(X), where the "J" stood for "Joint" - has faded in and out of several previous 30-year plans. The ships were always dropped for affordability reasons. The Navy then planned for the current ships to remain in service until 2029, and now has extended that deadline.

The 70-year planned service life might be a new record for an active Navy ship. Aircraft carriers are intended to serve for 50 years, and most surface combatants such as cruisers and destroyers are planned for 30-, 35- or 40-year lives. Only the sail frigate Constitution, a museum ship in Boston that was launched in 1797, has been in service longer, and she was never expected to last this long.

The revised command ship schedule is contained in an updated version of the Navy's 30-year plan sent to Congress in mid-May. The updates consist of several tables and a cover letter, and lack the explanations and written information provided in the full plan. Copies of some of the tables were acquired by Defense News.

Starting in 2011, the Navy is no longer required to submit a full plan each year to Congress, but rather is to tie the document to the Quadrennial Defense Review, a strategy document issued every four years that outlines the requirements for U.S. military forces. Some in Congress, including Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., would rather return to annual filing requirements. Wittman, chairman of the House Armed Services oversight and investigations subcommittee, has scheduled a hearing on the matter for June 1. No major changes are in the new fleet plan, but some of the tweaks include:

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As expected, a DDG 51-class Flight IIA destroyer was added in 2014, raising the number from one to two ships to be ordered. The Navy has previously discussed this addition, which is based on a multiyear procurement plan starting in 2013.

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A fourth littoral combat ship (LCS) has been added to 2012, as reflected in the

2012 budget request.

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Purchases of the T-AO fleet oilers have been brought forward to 2014 - also previously announced.

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An extra T-AGOS ocean surveillance ship has been added in 2013.

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One Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) has been eliminated in 2016, going from two to one.

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The plan still reflects a Mobile Landing Platform (MLP) ship in 2013, but that ship will be eliminated, as called for in the 2011 defense budget finally passed in early May. The Navy intends to buy three MLPs, the third of which is in the 2012 budget request.

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In the out years, the Navy cut an LSD(X) landing ship dock replacement ship from 2039 and now plans to build 11 of the ships.

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The first LPD(X) amphibious transport dock replacement is set for 2040.

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A big-deck assault ship is planned for 2041.

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The buys for LCS replacement ships in the 2030s have been beefed up, with three instead of two ships per year now scheduled for 2036 through 2041.

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A new surface combatant, previously designated DDG(X), has become the DDG 51 Flight IV, scheduled to begin in 2032 with two ships per year through 2041, except for three ships in 2036. The move means the basic DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class design, first procured in 1985, will be bought continuously for at least 56 years.

The plan does not address shortfalls in major surface combatants - cruisers and destroyers - or in attack submarines. With all ships accounted for, the revised plan shows the Navy purchasing 270 ships from 2012 through 2041, plus another five JHSVs using Army funds.

(DEFENSE NEWS 31 MAY 11) ... Christopher P. Cavas