HII Plans Additional Demonstration for Pharos Launcher for LDUUVs

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ARLINGTON, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) is seeking an opportunity to demonstrate its new launch and recovery platform for large-diameter UUVs (LDUUVs) at sea on a U.S. Navy amphibious landing platform dock ship, a company official said.

Brian Blanchette, vice president for Quality and Engineering at HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding, spoke to reporters in a teleconference at West 2023 on Feb. 14, a trade show and symposium of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association and the U.S. Naval Institute, and said the company would welcome a demonstration of the Pharos launch and recovery system from the well deck of an LPD either underway or in port.

The Pharos system is a prototype cradle large enough to accommodate an LDUUV than can be streamed behind the well deck of an LPD or a well-deck-equipped amphibious assault ship (LHA/LHD) to launch the LDUUV or recover it. The cradle is tethered to a winch.

The Pharos concept was developed by HII and underwent additional testing through cooperative agreements with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City, Florida, and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport, Rhode Island.

The Pharos was tested dockside in the HII Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi in June 2022 and towed in a river,

Blanchette said. The payload for the demonstration was HII's Proteus LDUUV.

He said that interface testing was conducted in September 2022 with a surrogate for the Navy's Snakehead LDUUV, followed in October 2022 with a ballast/de-ballast test with the Snakehead.

Scalable Concept

"When we went through the design process for this vehicle [Pharos], we did computations, including dynamic studies, to evaluate where in the wake zone of the LPD would be a favorable location for a launch and recovery vehicle and also did model basin testing at the University of New Orleans in their tow tank to look at a physical scale model and better understand the capabilities of the system at speed simulating a tow.

"We feel like we understand some of the challenges and have designed the system around those, but we look forward to at-sea testing to further validate the concept," he said. "We are in talks with the Navy trying to find a target of opportunity to interface with an LPD either pier-side or at sea."

HII also plans this year to integrate the Pharos with the REMUS 6000 UUV.

Blanchette said the Pharos concept is scalable and could be built to accommodate extra-large-diameter UUVs such as the Orca being developed by Boeing for the Navy.