Hot Production Line for Navy's Ship-to-Shore Connectors

Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) 104, attached to Assault Craft Unit 4, approaches the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) for well deck operations Dec. 1, 2022. LCAC 100 is the Navy and Marine Corps next generation landing craft designated to replace the legacy LCAC, providing a more reliable and capable high speed amphibious connector to deliver Sailors and Marines and their equipment from ship to shore. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Mark O. Klimenko*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Three years after the first Ship-to-Shore Connector (SSC) was delivered to the Navy, the service has accepted delivery of six SSCs, with a total of 24 under contract, with manufacturer Textron, the program manager said Jan. 11 at the Surface Navy Association's annual symposium.

Most recently, the Navy took delivery of LCAC 104 and LCAC 106 in June 2022 and November 2022, respectively, said Capt. Jason Grabelle, program manager for amphibious assault and connectors.

Four SSCs are currently at Assault Combat Unit 4 (ACU-4) in Norfolk, Va., he said, and a number of them are going through post-delivery testing and trials. Multiple craft are currently under construction. The next milestone will be LCAC 105 going to acceptance trials.

Past Issues Resolved

In terms of differences between the aging LCAC platform and the SSC craft that will replace it, Grabelle said the two

vessels basically do the same thing. The primary differences concern the four gas turbine engines on the SSC, as well as a lower life cycle cost for the SSC.

“ACUs are not only the operators, they are the maintainers,” Grabelle said. “All the plus-ups we’ve made on the SSC are related to improving operational availability and maintainability.”

Asked whether past issues with the gearbox and blade cracking are behind the program, Grabelle said those problems were no longer an issue.

“We definitely have a steady production baseline,” he said. “We are getting more and more craft delivered to the fleet … and the production line is hot and moving along.”