

Navy Admiral Selects Three Littoral Combat Ships for 2025 Basing with 5th Fleet



An unmanned surface vehicle is craned aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra (LCS 30), as a part of the first embarkation of the Mine Countermeasures (MCM) mission package, April 23. The MCM mission package is an integrated suite of unmanned maritime systems and sensors which locates, identifies, and destroys mines in the littorals while increasing the ship's standoff distance from the threat area. Littoral Combat Ships are fast, optimally-manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Vance Hand)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The admiral in charge of U. S. Navy surface forces has named the three Independence-class littoral combat ships (LCS) slated to be forward-deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet to replace the Avenger-class mine-countermeasures ships (MCMs).

“MCMs are reaching their end-of-service-lives, and we have to replace them, as great as they are,” said Vice Admiral Brendan McLane, commander, U.S. Naval Surface Forces, speaking May 23 at the International Mine Warfare Technology Symposium in San Diego. “Secretary of the Navy [Carlos] Del Toro has approved the strategic laydown which confirmed the deployment of LCS 2 variants – including [USS] Tulsa [LCS 16], Santa Barbara [LCS 32], and Canberra [LCS 30] – to deploy to Bahrain in 2025, and four more to Sasebo [Japan] in 2027.

“The platforms will have the MCM mission package and will replace our legacy MCMs,” McLane said. “But even with these

mission packages, we'll have to incorporate them into a team to be able to combat enemy mining operations. Joining the LCS will be a theater expeditionary MCM team [than] will deploy a combination of unmanned systems, divers, and sensors teamed together to defeat enemy mining. We're already doing some of that teamwork."

Two LCS have been deployed to the 5th Fleet area of responsibility so far: Freedom-class LCS USS Sioux City (LCS 11) in 2022 and USS Indianapolis (LCS 17) in 2023, the latter still deployed there.

"The Sioux City teamed with CTF-52's MCM expeditionary capability and embarked Helicopter Sea Combat 22 detachment to augment MCM capabilities in 5th Fleet," McLane said. "Sioux City paved the way for future LCS operations within 5th Fleet and showed what a valuable contributor and teammate the LCS platform can be. The full LCS with mission packages will bring even more capability to the 5th Fleet team."

McLane said he is "tremendously excited for the long-term viability of LCS as our enduring mine warfare platform due to their modularity and the ability to quickly design, develop, and deploy new subsystems within the MCM mission package will give the Navy persistent competitive advantage as mine warfare continues to evolve."