Vestdavit fuels orders with US Navy through multi-davit deal for new class of oilers

Vestdavit will deliver multiple davits for newbuild T-AO oilers under construction at General Dynamics NASSCO, with the first ship delivered, to be named USNS John Lewis, shown (foreground) at the San Diego yard during sea trials last year and others under construction in the background. Photo: General Dynamics NASSCO
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Davits supplied by Vestdavit are set to play an important role in efficient launch and recovery of fast craft to support refuelling operations at sea for the US naval fleet after the company was awarded a major contract for six vessels being built by General Dynamics NASSCO in the US.

The contract covers delivery of a total of 12 high-specification PLRH-5000 davits to be installed on the John Lewis-class of T-AO oilers ordered by the US Navy at the shipbuilder's San Diego shipyard, with two on each ship from T-AO 208 through T-AO 213 in the newbuild series.

"This represents a significant order that further underpins our strong position in the US as our largest market and reflects the trust shown in the reliability of our davit solutions by the US Navy, which is one of our biggest customers in this market," says Vestdavit Managing Director Rolf Andreas Wigand.

Extensive newbuild programme

He adds that Vestdavit is “really pleased to continue the relationship” with General Dynamics NASSCO, a unit of global aerospace and defence company General Dynamics, following its recent delivery of multi-boat davits for US Navy ESB-6 and ESB-7 ships also under construction at the yard.

The US Navy has so far ordered a total of nine of the new class of T-AO oilers with a total contract value of $5.5 billion, of which the first was delivered last year, as part of an ongoing newbuild construction programme in which as many as 20 such vessels are planned.

The 745-foot-long oilers, which will be operated by Military Sealift Command (MSC), are designed to transfer fuel to US Navy carrier strike groups operating at sea, with the capacity to carry 162,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and a speed of up to 20 knots.

These ships are dependent on high availability and efficient operation of boat handling systems for deployment of fast craft such as rescue boats in variable sea states to facilitate safe and reliable refuelling operations, according to Magnus Oding, General Manager of the Norwegian davit supplier’s US subsidiary Vestdavit Inc.

High-specification davit features

The PLRH-5000 single-point davits will be used to handle the US Navy’s seven-metre RHIBs (Rigid-Hull Inflatable Boats) and incorporate a range of motion compensation and safety features that allow them to function effectively also in challenging conditions with high sea states, he says.

These include shock absorbers for removing peak loads, constant tension for safe and efficient recovery in rough weather, and guiding arms that act as an anti-pendulation device to keep the RHIB steady.

The skid-mounted davit is delivered as a fully self-contained

unit for ease of installation onboard ships, with a requirement only for welding in place, filling with hydraulic oil and connection to power supply.

As well as naval applications, the DNV-classed davit type with lifting capacity up to 15,000kg is typically used on offshore patrol vessels, fishery protection and law enforcement vessels, and search and rescue vessels.

Expanding naval orderbook

The latest order adds to the tally of more than 2000 davit systems supplied by Vestdavit worldwide, including the US where it also counts the US Coast Guard and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) among its major clients, as well as several commercial customers.

With a strong track record of davit deliveries to navies around the world, Wigand is confident orders from the defence sector will continue to grow in the coming years.

“Constant product development and innovation in line with client requirements, supported by robust technology, means we are able to deliver on quality and reliability to meet the demanding standards of the naval market,” he says.