



# Delivering the Goods

News from the U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

## Rear Adm. Korn Draws on Background and Experience as the New Program Executive Officer for Coast Guard Acquisition

By Linda M. Johnson

WASHINGTON—Delivering the Goods recently sat down with Rear Adm. John H. Korn to get his perspective on the challenges and opportunities in the U.S. Coast Guard’s acquisition portfolio, which includes more than 20 major acquisition projects worth more than \$27 billion.

Korn assumed his duty as the Program Executive Officer (PEO) and Director of Acquisition Programs on June 16, 2009. His duties as PEO include management oversight of all Coast Guard acquisition programs and projects.

Korn most recently served as chief of staff and second in command of the Coast Guard’s Eighth District, which covers operations in 26 states and includes more than 1,200 miles of coastline and 10,300 miles of inland waterways from Florida to Mexico. Coming from both an operations and mission support background, Korn brings a wealth of hands-on experience to his new role.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Delivering the Goods (DTG):** Admiral, can you talk a bit about your engineering background and how that will help you as the new PEO for acquisition?

**Rear Adm. Korn:** As an engineer, I like to solve problems and I like to know how things work. My experience in Coast Guard aeronautical engineering has been related to personnel and systems management and I think that translates well to the type of work I will be doing in acquisition.

I understand engineering principles, technical standards and specifications and the systems engineering process. I am familiar with testing, research and development, life cycle management and requirements determination. I also have some experience in how the technical authority works with acquisition, although it wasn’t quite as structured or developed as it is now. In aviation, strict configuration management has been a business practice for many years and we are translating that need for configuration control to all our assets. I’ve got experience as well dealing with the Department of Defense and working with contractors from my time at the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center, now the Aviation Logistics Center.

**DTG:** Can you talk about your experience in Coast Guard operations and how that will help you deliver the best possible goods to our operators?

**Korn:** Well, there’s nothing like being the operator to help you figure out the type of things that are important to mission accomplishment. That’s the nice thing about most active duty personnel, as we’ve grown up in the organization, we’ve done a variety of things and operated assets, in a many cases, or at least seen them in operation and know what they are required to do. As a recent Sector Commander, I’ve seen just about all aspects of Coast Guard operations. I was involved with boats, aircraft and C4ISR (command, control, commun-



Rear Adm. John H. Korn, the Acquisition Directorate’s new Program Executive Officer, U.S. Coast Guard photo by PA2 Daniel Bender

ications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). I have a handle on what some of the shortcomings are in design and logistics structure and how things

*continued on page 2*

**inside:**

- HC-130J Missionization Project Ahead of Schedule.....pg 4
- Master Chief Q&A.....pg 6

*continued from page 1*

maybe could be improved to help the operators out. I also appreciate the need for sensors, having flown aircraft for quite a long time without sensors or with inadequate sensors. I'm glad to see that we're outfitting our MH-60 and MH-65 helicopters with sensors and surface search radar, and our HC-144A Casa aircraft with sensors and mission systems. I've been involved in many recent disaster responses, including Hurricanes Ivan, Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike. These events really brought home the need for interoperability and the ability to talk to all different types of stakeholders in a response. In aviation, nearly all my career has been both as an operator or pilot conducting operations, and as a mission supporter in engineering. Constantly looking at issues from both sides helps develop perspective. It gives you a good

idea of the importance of the three "ilities:" reliability, maintainability and supportability. Those things are important to design into new assets in the early stages because once they're fielded, they're not easy, and in some cases impossible, to fix. If it's not designed well, the asset may take too long to repair or may fail too often.

**Korn:** One challenge is to attract and retain qualified people to our acquisition workforce, which is the fastest growing workforce in government. The most difficult problem that most federal agencies are having right now is to get qualified applicants and manage competition for limited resources. We have to work the human

---

*“There’s nothing like being the operator to help you figure out the type of things that are important to mission accomplishment.”*

---

**DTG:** What do you see as some of the biggest challenges facing the Acquisition Directorate from a PEO perspective?

capital strategy to figure out why people join the organization and why they leave and try to improve so we can attract and retain the best people. Another challenge is finishing the transition to the lead systems integrator role (LSI). We are doing it now but we need to institutionalize our roles and responsibilities and relationships with the technical authorities and the sponsor. We need to develop overarching strategies for our portfolio of assets to become more effective as the LSI and to mature relationships in our modernized organizational structure.

**DTG:** On the flip side, what do you see as some of the most exciting opportunities ahead for the Acquisition Directorate?

**Korn:** All our projects are really great opportunities to add value. We've got a number of good projects that are all great opportunities to make a difference and add value to the people who operate our assets on the front lines.

**DTG:** As PEO, what are some of your goals over the next couple years?



Rear Adm. John H. Korn speaks with the management of Marinette Marine Corporation regarding Response Boat-Medium production at the Aluminum Center of Excellence production facility in Green Bay, Wisc. *U.S. Coast Guard photo by Damian R. Nastri*

*continued on page 3*

*continued from page 2*

**Korn:** First, to continue to build and sustain a certified acquisition workforce. By that I mean that every acquisition professional will gain and maintain the required level of certification or higher. Next, I want to get all our projects Major Systems Acquisition Manual (MSAM) compliant. We have to work backwards in some cases and get our stakeholders comfortable with our management processes and acquisition expertise. When we achieve full MSAM compliance, it will be a big step in the right direction. We also have a very good detailed plan on the way forward—the Blueprint for Continuous Improvement—and we need to fully implement that plan. I have numerous goals for projects just in the coming year. For aviation, we need to deliver HC-130J missionization within a year on aircraft numbers four, five and six (aircraft number four was delivered shortly after our interview); finish installing Selex radar on the HC-130Hs; achieve initial operating capability on MH-60T and complete six more deliveries within a year; deliver HC-144 aircraft number nine and mission systems pallets numbers four, five and six; achieve low rate initial production approval for the MH-65's common avionics operating system and automated flight control system; and achieve



One of Rear Adm. John H. Korn's major goals is to deliver and commission the second National Security Cutter, *Waesche*, shown here undergoing builder's trials.  
*Photo courtesy of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding*

boat acquisition strategy for cutter boats and all small boats with all our stakeholders; and award low rate initial production for the Sentinel-class patrol boat. For C4ISR, we

some of the keys to developing an effective acquisition organization from a project perspective?

**Korn:** One key is communication, collaboration and partnerships that include different opinions. It's got to be a healthy dialogue with the sponsor, technical authorities and all stakeholders involved. Another is a systematic rigor in documenting processes such as MSAM compliance, configuration control and systems engineering. We still need innovative and creative project managers but we have to conform to process to be transparent and traceable. A third key is developing and maintaining a high performing, qualified and motivated workforce. ■

---

*“One key is communication, collaboration and partnerships that include different opinions.”*

---

full rate production for the obsolete component upgrade on the MH-65 as well. On the surface side, we need to deliver and commission *Waesche*; develop and execute the Offshore Patrol Cutter acquisition strategy with all our stakeholders; complete Response Boat-Medium operational testing and evaluation, enter full rate production and deliver 14 boats; develop and execute a small

need to deploy and accept another six Rescue 21 sectors; develop and execute the Coast Guard Logistics Information Management System acquisition strategy; and figure out the way ahead for the Common Operational Picture, Nationwide Automatic Identification System and Interagency Operations Centers.

**DTG:** In your opinion, what are

## Coast Guard's HC-130J Missionization Project Ahead of Schedule, Benefits from Lessons Learned

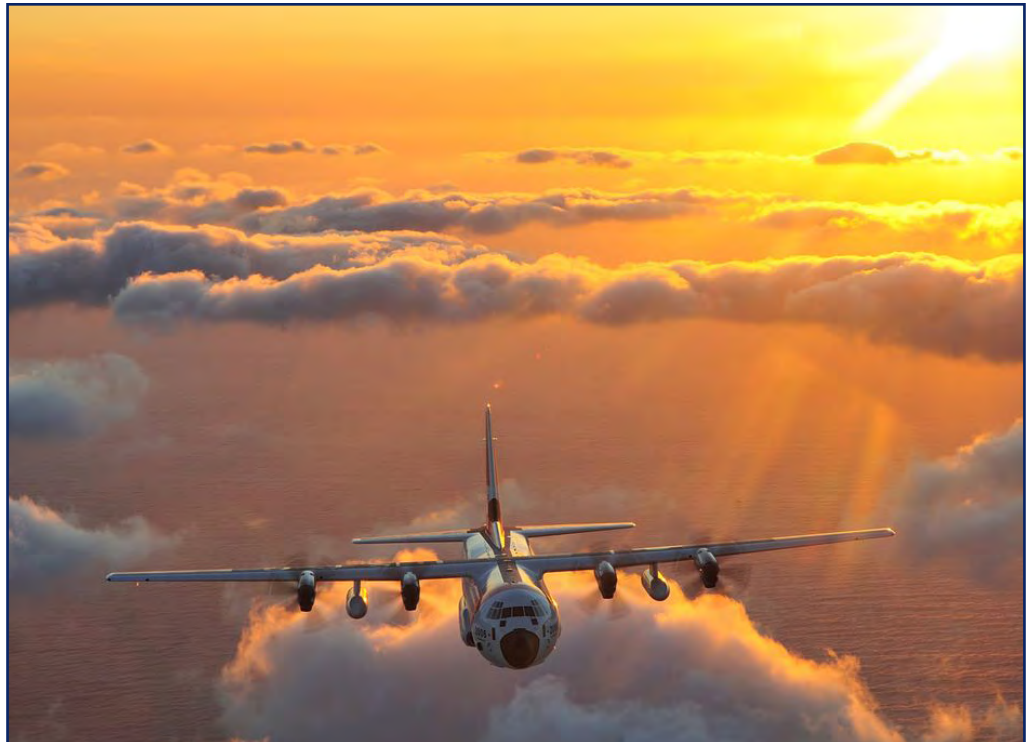
*By Hunter Keeter*

The U.S. Coast Guard's \$162.5 million HC-130J Missionization Project, which upgrades crucial communication and surveillance electronic equipment on the service's six J-model Hercules long range surveillance aircraft, has provided a fourth plane to Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C. The August 19, 2009, delivery occurred 10 days ahead of schedule, thanks to lessons learned during the development and installation of new mission systems aboard three previous aircraft.

"Of the six airplanes, aircraft four, arguably, could be called the most important acceptance of them all," said Scott Rettie, deputy manager of the HC-130J Missionization Project. "It was the aircraft that reaped the benefits of some of the lessons learned on aircraft one through three. We have created a [process] model that will allow five and six to be accepted much more smoothly."

The business and process model to which Rettie referred is a restructuring of the project's contract and infrastructure from a developmental approach to production and installation of an established technical configuration. Last spring, the Coast Guard closed its HC-130J Missionization Asset Project Office (APO), which had been established at Elizabeth City in July 2003 to oversee the development and procurement of the mission systems kits and the integration of that equipment on the first three aircraft.

Now, with the kits procured for all six aircraft, the Coast Guard has scaled the project's scope of work to focus on the installation and testing of the equipment aboard the final three aircraft in the series. According to Rettie, this change has improved



An HC-130J is shown in flight over North Carolina. When complete, the HC-130J missionization project will have delivered six aircraft featuring new radar and electro optical sensor systems, and an advanced command, control and communication electronics suite. *U.S. Coast Guard photo by Dave Silva*

the cost and schedule of delivery for missionizing the remaining planes.

"The reason why this contract was restructured was partly cost control and partly schedule control, and it was to take advantage of what we learned on aircraft one through three," Rettie said. "We bought and assembled all the kits, for the most part, and the design configuration is stable. By [focusing the project] to basically taking an existing [equipment] configuration and installing it, we have made it much more affordable."

Rettie's assessment is shared by Lt. Anthony Ennamorato, HC-130J systems manager from the Coast Guard's Engineering and Logistics

Directorate who is on detached duty at Greenville, S.C. Lockheed Martin, under contract with Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS), completes the missionization equipment kit installation at its Greenville facility. According to Ennamorato, the government and industry teams working on the J-model missionization have succeeded in reducing the project's learning curve.

Lockheed Martin was able to employ "about 90 percent of the people who had done the work on the previous three aircraft, there [was] not as much of a learning curve," Ennamorato said. "We have seen the results of that on the fourth aircraft."

*continued on page 4*

continued from page 4

## Acceptance Process

The HC-130J Missionization Project modifies the aircraft by installing kits at Lockheed Martin's Greenville plant. The kits are composed of government furnished equipment, including a fuselage-mounted EL/M-2022(V)3 long range multi-mode radar by Elta; a nose-mounted Star SAFIRE III electro-optical sensor system (including an infrared camera) by FLIR Systems, Inc.; a communication suite and DF-430 direction finding set by Rockwell Collins; and dual operators' workstations on the flight deck.

The enhanced capabilities of the aircraft include some firsts for the Coast Guard's C-130 fleet, such as the 360-degree multi-mode radar, which can track and display targets 100 nautical miles away from an altitude of 5,000 feet. Linked to the Coast Guard's Automatic Identification System, the missionized aircraft also help ensure maritime homeland security by collecting and disseminating navigation data on vessels approaching U.S. ports.

Once the equipment kit installation is complete, further installation and integration testing is conducted before the aircraft is presented to the Coast Guard for Acceptance Testing (AT). The Coast Guard oversees the AT process, ensuring that any discrepancies identified during testing are sorted out prior to government delivery.

During AT, a Coast Guard aircrew conducts a functional check flight, which is a maintenance requirement for any Coast Guard aircraft following an extended period of depot level maintenance. Then, the service conducts a mission system acceptance flight or flights.

For the fourth HC-130J, there were two mission system acceptance flights to test every aspect of the aircraft and mission systems' performance, Ennamorato and

Rettie noted. During the test flights, personnel from Air Station Elizabeth City acted as the acceptance authority, a role taken by project office staff during the first three deliveries. The presence of operational aircrew set the bar high for the acquisition project office and contractors to ensure that the aircraft functioned flawlessly before final acceptance.

"We had air station people in all the seats," Ennamorato noted. "Just as we have been learning lessons over the last year on [missionizing] the airplane, they have been learning lessons on how the airplane works and so they are a much more educated consumer. Having the end-user driving the acceptance process was a pretty big deal. When we signed the [government materiel inspection and receiving report], there was full stakeholder agreement that we were ready to accept that aircraft."

Meanwhile, the pilots, mission system operators and maintenance crews at Air Station Elizabeth City have been carrying a heavy load, supporting the acquisition project while

accomplishing their own missions. A busy workload for a squadron with that, until August, had just three aircraft on the flight line.

"There is no doubt that this spring and summer were extremely challenging for the air station. The air station has supported all of our acquisition activities in Greenville, including maintenance on the airplane, flying the airplane," Rettie said. "They also have been supporting their mission tasking, including the International Ice Patrol Mission until well into June, and standing watch in 'bravo zero' status [wherein a Coast Guard air or boat crew maintains a 24- to 48-hour alert, ready to get underway within 30 minutes of a search and rescue alarm]."

With the arrival of the fourth aircraft, Elizabeth City now has additional capacity. The fifth aircraft is now undergoing preliminary acceptance testing and soon will be delivered. Aircraft number six has been inducted to the installation line and is scheduled for delivery next year. ■



The fourth HC-130J gets ready to transit the field at the Lockheed Martin facility in Greenville, S.C., on its way to Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C. The Coast Guard has four missionized J-models standing watch for International Ice Patrol, search and rescue, and other missions. *U.S. Coast Guard photo by Lt. Tony Ennamorato*

**M**ASTER CHIEF: How can I provide input on the design of a new cutter, boat or aircraft before it is built?

A: This is the kind of question I love. All too often I get questions like, “why didn’t you do this?” or “why couldn’t you have done that?” Although there is nothing wrong with those questions, having someone ask, “what can I do to help?” is much more enjoyable.

The answer has to start with an explanation of the entire acquisition enterprise. The program sponsor defines how the asset will be used and the specific operating requirements. For a cutter, the sponsor would be the Office of Cutter Forces (CG-751) and for a boat, it would be the Office of Boat Forces (CG-731) and so on. We also have what we call technical authorities, whose function is to make sure that the proper technical standards are incorporated into the entire lifecycle of the project, taking into consideration things like maintenance and support. These technical authorities are the Human Resources (CG-1), Engineering and Logistics (CG-4) and Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Information Technology (CG-6) Directorates. The Acquisition Directorate (CG-9) teams with these offices to acquire an asset that will meet their mission needs.

So how can you help? You can be an active part of the process. When a new program is started, a lot of research is done and there are surveys, studies and site visits. Deck plate Guardians are involved throughout the process and while no one enjoys taking time out from work to fill out a survey or questionnaire or to sit in on a meeting, this is your opportunity to have an effect on the next cutter, boat or aircraft. If asked, please do your best to participate even if you don’t see an immediate benefit.

Talk to the sponsors (program offices) and technical authorities (see above). If there is a gap in the current asset’s ability to execute the mission, please let them know and give them suggestions to solve the problem. For our enlisted workforce, that means communicating with your RFMC (Rating Force Master Chief). They have direct input into the development process.

If you are fortunate enough to be assigned to a unit that receives the earliest version of a new asset, you may also have an opportunity to participate in initial testing and evaluation. Acquisition is a process of continuous improvement and input from operators and users is a key part of that process.

Lastly, please feel free to contact me or your local CMC any time. We are always available to listen to new ideas.

— MCPO Brett F. Ayer, Command Master Chief, Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

[To submit a question for an upcoming Acquisition Directorate newsletter, please email Master Chief Brett F. Ayer directly at: [Brett.F.Ayer@uscg.mil](mailto:Brett.F.Ayer@uscg.mil) or [acquisitionwebsite@uscg.mil](mailto:acquisitionwebsite@uscg.mil).]

