Makin Island Saves $2 Million in Fuel Costs During Transit to San Diego

WASHINGTON -- PCU Makin Island (LHD 8) arrived at its homeport of San Diego, Calif., on Sept. 14 after spending nearly two months at sea. LHD 8 is the first U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship to replace steam boilers with gas turbines, and the first Navy surface ship to be equipped with both gas turbines and an Auxiliary Propulsion System (APS). By using this unique propulsion system in conjunction with operational awareness of the crew, the ship saved approximately $2 million dollars in fuel costs during transit compared to a ship using steam boilers.

Instead of using its gas turbines which are less efficient at lower speeds, the ship will be able to use its APS for roughly 75 percent of the time the ship is underway. Over the course of Makin Island’s lifecycle, the Navy expects to see a savings of more than $250 million. Because the gas turbines will be used infrequently, the Navy will also save on maintenance and lifecycle costs.

Makin Island left the Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding (NGSB) yard in Pascagoula, Miss., July 10 on its maiden voyage, manned for the first time by the ship’s crew. The ship sailed through the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Strait of Magellan, and both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans during its transit around South America.

Now in its homeport, Makin Island is preparing for its October 2009 commissioning. Once commissioned, the ship and its crew will begin a series of post-delivery tests and trials to thoroughly evaluate the ship’s systems and to complete certifications in advance of operational deployment.

Second only to aircraft carriers in size, LHDs are the largest amphibious warships in the world. This powerful class is 844 feet long, can reach speeds of more than 20 knots, and has a displacement of more than 41,000 tons. Wasp-class amphibious assault ships are designed to remain off shore near troubled areas of the world, ready to send forces ashore quickly by helicopters, tilt rotor aircraft and Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) hovercraft.

The Navy’s Program Executive Office for Ships (PEO Ships) is responsible for the development and acquisition of U.S. Navy surface ships and has delivered six major surface ships to the fleet since the beginning of 2009. PEO Ships is working in conjunction with its industry partners to achieve steady production for all programs to increase production efficiencies and leverage cost savings. Delivering high-quality war fighting assets, - while balancing affordability and capability, is key to supporting the Navy’s Maritime Strategy and building the Navy’s 313-ship force structure. PEO Ships is committed to delivering quality ships at an affordable price.

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