



AIR FORCE TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release 14-08-06/001

Aug. 7, 2014

AFTAC's maritime radar becomes operational

By Susan A. Romano, AFTAC Public Affairs

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – The Air Force Technical Applications Center has a welcome addition to its treaty monitoring capabilities – the Cobra King radar system aboard the USNS Howard O. Lorenzen.

Cobra King is a new, state-of-the-art mobile radar system consisting of S- and X-band phased radars that AFTAC employs to provide worldwide, high quality, high resolution, multi-wavelength radar data to the Department of Defense's strategic community, the Missile Defense Agency and other government agencies.



The radar and ship are the sea component of DoD's Cobra program that monitors missile and space launches. Other Cobra platforms include the Cobra Ball (airborne tracker) Cobra Dane (stationary array), Cobra Shoe (overseas antenna site) and AFTAC's recently decommissioned maritime vessel, Cobra Judy (USNS Observation Island).

The vessel is operated by Military Sealift Command under a support agreement with AFTAC. The ship operates with a combined crew of civilian mariners who are responsible for operating and navigating the ship, as well as military technicians and civilian contractors who operate and maintain the radar and communications equipment.

Considered to be the "Father of Electronic Warfare," Howard O. Lorenzen was an electrical engineer for the Naval Research Laboratory who was instrumental in the creation of the U.S.'s electronic intelligence capabilities.

"This is an extremely exciting time for AFTAC," said Col Chris Worley, AFTAC commander. "As Cobra Judy was decommissioned, Cobra King quickly transitioned to ensure our mission of foreign ballistic missile detection was virtually uninterrupted, and we were able to continuously execute our international treaty monitoring responsibilities."

The Lorenzen underwent final contract trials off the coast of California in November 2013, which exercised all aspects of the vessel and its systems, including main propulsion, damage control, supply, deck, navigation, habitability, electrical systems and operation. The trials proved to be 100 percent successful, both in port and at sea.

The cost of the project, which was awarded to primary contractor Raytheon, was valued more than \$1.74 billion. Northrup Grumman, General Dynamics, IBM and Kiewit Offshore Services are also involved in the project.

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“The mission commander aboard Cobra King is a member of my operations team,” said Col. Jonathan R. VanNoord, AFTAC’s Director of Operations. “His or her ultimate responsibility is to ensure the platform team members are able to successfully collect mission data. In addition to daily mission taskings, the MC works closely with experts from MSC to develop a prioritized listing of necessary ship-related items whenever the vessel is in port or at the shipyard.”

The ship’s designation is T-AGM 25 and was built in Pascagoula, Miss., by VT Halter Marine, Inc. It weighs in at 12,642 tons and is 534 feet in length, with a beam of 89 feet.

