

Battle stations for boat-handling systems

The reliability of davits when launching rapid-response craft from a vessel is the difference between success and failure of a military or humanitarian mission.

BERGEN, NORWAY, March 12, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The clock is ticking. Timing is critical. As is the covert Nato mission in the dead of night to intercept suspected armed pirates en route to attack a UN humanitarian aid ship moored off Eritrea to supply refugees caught up in the Ethiopia crisis. Human lives, as well as valuable cargo and assets, are at risk.

While this is a hypothetical scenario, it reflects real-life challenges for navies and coastguards in tackling such missions that are critically dependent on rapid deployment of high-speed craft, as well as the functionality of technology used to launch such vessels.

Readiness is key and this necessitates the reliability and efficiency of davit systems to perform repetitive missions at sea in a failsafe manner, as well as effective follow-up maintenance to ensure these systems continue to work efficiently.

"The sea is a very difficult environment in which to conduct military missions as one is up against a dual enemy: volatile marine conditions as well as the actual enemy," explains William Goodall, a former surface warfare officer in the British Royal Navy and now area sales manager with Bergen-based davit supplier Vestdavit.

"It is therefore vital that a davit system is available for operations as and when required, that it functions correctly and has the widest possible operational window so that it can be deployed in extreme sea state conditions if needed."

Reliability and regularity

Navies use a variety of launch craft for a range of vital tasks including counter-terrorism, operations to combat piracy and prevent drug smuggling that entail protection of human life, as well as recovery of arms and ammunition, explosives and contraband.

Such craft are also deployed in humanitarian efforts, for example to rescue stranded refugees or vessel crews in the event of a maritime accident, along with more routine tasks such as inspection of fishing vessels to ensure national fishery laws are being upheld and supervision of territorial rights.

These tasks demand a high level of durability, reliability and regularity for davit systems, which

can be used as many as 12 times a day for launch and recovery of craft in the case of fishery inspections.

Delivery of dependable boat-handling systems requires these to meet both technical and performance specifications that enable them to respond as expected in real-life situations.

"We believe we need to walk the talk. That means not just supplying standardised equipment for our clients only to meet technical specifications but making sure it is fit-for-purpose and able to fulfill functional requirements in practice," Goodall says.

"The system has to deliver when you press the button, with highly motivated personnel and equipment all ready to go," adds the ex-officer.

Vestdavit has a long-established and proven track record in supplying efficient davit systems, having delivered more than 2000 such systems since 1965 including recent reference deliveries on vessel newbuilds for the US, French and Australian navies, as well as the US Coast Guard.

Davit diversity

He attributes the "impressive longevity" of Vestdavit's systems to durable components and regular preventive maintenance involving both weekly checks, and annual and five-yearly inspections in line with IMO guidelines.

This is necessary to counter the stresses and strains from repetitive operations in tough sea conditions on a davit's moving parts - such as shock absorbers and winches - to ensure it remains fit for an operational window of up to sea state six.

The functionality of such components is also vital to safeguard both personnel and valuable equipment inside the craft being dropped to the water, such as a remote-operated vehicle that may be used to detonate a mine at sea.

Vestdavit delivers a diversity of davits required to handle the wide range of craft used in operations for naval, coast guard and seismic customers that form its core clientele.

Technical director Helge Gravdal says the company's experience with previous deliveries enables it to determine the correct specifications for a davit based on the client's operational requirement.

"Clients such as navies may have very specific requirements, such as the need to deploy a craft rapidly at speed in a high sea state, and this influences the design of davit we deliver. So dialogue with the end-user is very important to us," Gravdal says.

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