NetFires Limited Liability Company Receives $1.1 Billion Contract For System Development

NetFires LLC, a limited liability company established by Lockheed Martinand Raytheon Company , has received a $1.1 billion contract for System Design and Development (SDD) for the Non Line-of-Sight -- Launch System (NLOS-LS), previously known as NetFires. NLOS-LS is a family of artillery missiles fired from a vertical launcher that can be deployed by ground or air assets throughout a theater and networked to quickly engage an enemy.

The two NetFires LLC partner companies will evenly split the SDD contract.

The sole-source, six-year SDD contract includes design and development of the Loitering Attack Missile (LAM), the Precision Attack Missile (PAM) and an autonomous Container Launch Unit (CLU). Raytheon is developing the PAM, Lockheed Martin is developing the LAM and together they will produce the CLU. The NLOS-LS Task Force, U.S. Army Aviation & Missile Command, Huntsville, AL, is the contracting agency.

The contract covers developing common missile components and equipment that can be used by both the LAM and PAM, resulting in lower cost in development, production and throughout the life-cycle of the program. The LAM will search wide areas for targets and relay their location back to commanders, who can then direct PAMs or other assets to the target. The commanders may also ask the LAM to break off its search and attack other targets.

"The NetFires LLC is committed to producing a system that will serve our forces well in those defining moments on the battlefield," said Ric Magness, president of NetFires LLC. "The NLOS-LS will be a breakthrough technological solution for the future fighting force. By leveraging our companies' expertise in targeting, command and control, and precision attack, we can provide the Army with cutting-edge solutions for the Future Force."

"The success we have demonstrated through the DARPA demonstration phase has positioned our team to be ready to enter SDD," said Scott Speet, executive vice president of NetFires LLC and NLOS-LS program director at Raytheon. "We are looking forward to bringing this revolutionary capability to the FCS (Future Combat System) Unit of Action and tomorrow's soldier."

Both companies were under contract to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to demonstrate NetFires technology. Elements include prototypes of a LAM, PAM and launcher. Although the two missiles have significantly different mission profiles, the objective is that they both operate as part of a system that includes a common launcher.

The NLOS-LS weapon system will provide non line-of-sight fires for the Army's Future Combat Systems and has been a DARPA-managed technology development program since 1997, when the program was conceived and known as the Advanced Fire Support System. Later on, a NetFires competitive downselect narrowed the field to a Lockheed Martin LAM and Raytheon PAM. As flight testing of the LAM and PAM missiles was under way in 2003 by DARPA, the Army issued contracts to Raytheon and Lockheed Martin for a risk-reduction effort.

The LAM is an expendable, loitering hunter-killer. In production, it will be about 60 inches long and weigh less than 120 pounds. It is capable of searching a large area using a laser radar (LADAR) seeker with automatic target recognition. LAM's initial capability will be 30 minutes of loitering at 70 kilometers using its micro turbojet. While loitering, LAM will be able to report the identification and exact location of targets without exercising its lethal capability.

The PAM is a low-cost direct attack missile that is also seven inches in diameter and weighs about 117 pounds, and will provide a wide range of support up to 40 kilometers. It will include a variable thrust solid rocket motor, dual-mode uncooled infrared/semi-active laser seeker, and a multi-mode warhead. Two-way data links on LAM and PAM will provide for re-tasking while in-flight and downlinking of images.

Raytheon Company , with 2003 sales of $18.1 billion, is an industry leader in defense and government electronics, space, information technology, technical services, and business and special mission aircraft. With headquarters in Waltham, Mass., Raytheon employs 78,000 people worldwide.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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