Lockheed Martin LCS Team Lays Keel On FREEDOM, Nation's First Littoral Combat Ship

Today the keel was laid for FREEDOM (LCS 1), marking a significant milestone in production of the U.S. Navy's first Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). LCS is a new class of surface combatant, designed to defeat enemy threats in shallow coastal waters. FREEDOM is under construction at Marinette Marine and will be delivered to the Navy in late 2006.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050602/PHTH046)

"It was barely three years ago that we dared to dream of a new vision for our Navy's future," said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark. "Today that vision of American seapower will be welded into the keel of the very first Littoral Combat Ship - and that ship shall be called the United States Ship Freedom."

"This is a rewarding day for the entire LCS team and signifies a major milestone in the LCS program," said Fred Moosally, president of Lockheed Martin Maritime Systems & Sensors. "We are proud to be the team bringing FREEDOM to the U.S. Navy fleet."

Before more than 200 guests, Birgit Smith, the ship's sponsor, and Clark authenticated the keel, assisted by veteran Marinette Marine welder Jim Renner. Smith was selected as sponsor for FREEDOM (LCS 1) by Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England. She is the widow of Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery and gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

LCS, a revolutionary naval combatant designed to dominate the world's coastal waters, provides the Navy with fast, maneuverable and shallow draft ships aimed at maximizing mission flexibility. The ship's first missions will include mine warfare, anti-submarine warfare and surface warfare.

The Lockheed Martin team design, a proven semi-planing steel monohull, provides outstanding agility and high-speed maneuverability with known seakeeping characteristics to support launch and recovery operations of manned and unmanned vehicles, mission execution and optimum crew comfort. The team designed a low-risk, affordable solution that provides the Navy with a maneuverable, flexible, networked surface combatant.

The Lockheed Martin team was awarded a contract for final design in May 2004, with options for up to two Flight 0, or initial production, ships.

The Lockheed Martin-led team includes naval architect Gibbs & Cox, ship builders Marinette Marine, a subsidiary of The Manitowoc Company, Inc. , and Bollinger Shipyards, as well as best-of-industry domestic and international teammates to provide a low-risk, affordable LCS solution.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martinemploys 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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