Nation's First Littoral Combat Ship Christened And Launched By Lockheed Martin LCS Team

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History was made here today when the nation's first Littoral Combat Ship, FREEDOM (LCS-1) -- the inaugural ship in an entirely new class of U.S. Navy surface warships -- was christened and launched at the Marinette Marine shipyard.

The agile 377-foot FREEDOM -- designed and built by a team led by Lockheed Martin -- will help the Navy defeat growing littoral, or close-to- shore, threats and provide access and dominance in coastal water battlespace. Displacing 3,000 metric tons and with a capability of reaching speeds well over 40 knots, FREEDOM will be a fast, maneuverable and networked surface combatant with operational flexibility to execute focused missions, such as mine warfare, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare and humanitarian relief.

FREEDOM's christening ceremony included the traditional smashing of a champagne bottle across the ship's bow, performed by ship's sponsor Birgit Smith. Smith, the wife of U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery and gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom, was selected as FREEDOM's sponsor by Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England.

FREEDOM made a spectacular side-launch before an audience of thousands who had lined both sides of the Menominee River, which divides the states of Wisconsin and Michigan.

"Just a little more than three years ago she was just an idea, now FREEDOM stands before us. And on this morning, we christen her, send her down the ways and get her ready to join the Fleet next year," Admiral Michael G. Mullen, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Officer. "It comes none too soon ... because there are tough challenges out there that ONLY she can handle."

"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."

In 2004, the Navy contracted the Lockheed Martin-led industry team to develop its first LCS. The team's LCS design for FREEDOM -- a survivable, semi-planing steel monohull -- provides outstanding maneuverability with proven sea-keeping characteristics to support launch and recovery operations, mission execution and optimum crew comfort.

Now formally christened and launched, FREEDOM will continue to undergo outfitting and testing at Marinette Marine. FREEDOM will be commissioned by the U.S. Navy in 2007 and eventually homeported in San Diego, CA.

The Lockheed Martin LCS team received a contract in June 2006 to build a second Littoral Combat Ship. Construction on this ship, yet to be named, will begin in Bollinger Shipyards Lockport, LA (near New Orleans), in early 2007.

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

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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