U.S. Army Awards Lockheed Martin $14 Million Contract For Innovative High Power Fiber Laser System

The U.S. Army awarded Lockheed Martina $14 million contract to design, develop, build and test a first-of-its-kind high power fiber laser-based system suitable for military applications.

The Army Space and Missile Defense Command contract includes options for the next six years. If exercised, the options would increase the contract's value to $59 million.

The program, called the Robust Electric Laser Initiative (RELI), features a fiber laser architecture capable of producing the 100 kilowatts or more of high quality power needed for a broad range of military "speed-of-light" defensive applications on air, land and sea platforms. Fiber lasers typically require less power and are more compact than chemical, gas and other types of lasers.

"We have leveraged the laser expertise from across Lockheed Martin to bring this new technology to the Army," said Dan Schultz, vice president of Lockheed Martin Ship and Aviation Systems. "Our system is a compact, lightweight and electrically driven system that can be used in a wide variety of applications and platforms and bring tremendous benefits to the Army and other military customers."

A fiber laser utilizes an optical fiber to produce near perfect quality beams and confine the light within the glass structure of the fiber without mirrors or other optics that can become misaligned. This helps to account for the system's small size and ability to generate high power, while using less electricity.

Fiber laser technology -- similar to that used for cutting metals, optical communications, medical applications and spectroscopy -- has benefited greatly from widespread commercial research and development investment compared to traditional lasers that have relied on limited Department of Defense funding.

This investment in fiber lasers has fueled dynamic technological breakthroughs leading to the development of laser systems that produce significantly higher power. The recent advances in fiber laser technology include reduced power requirements, high beam quality and improved heat management. Lockheed Martin is leveraging these advances to develop RELI.

The work will be performed at the Lockheed Martin Aculight facility in Bothell, Wash., outside of Seattle. Lockheed Martin Aculight is a leader in providing quality, innovative and cost-effective laser solutions to meet customers' national defense, aerospace, scientific and medical application needs.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 136,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The Corporation's 2009 sales from continuing operations were $44.5 billion.

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