Sparks Of Life: Lockheed Martin-Led Team Lays Keel On Nation's Thirteenth Littoral Combat Ship

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MARINETTE, Wis., Feb. 9, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- The Lockheed Martin [NYSE: LMT]-led industry team officially laid the keel for the U.S. Navy's thirteenth Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), the future USS Wichita, in a ceremony held at Marinette Marine Corporation in Marinette, Wisconsin, today.

Ship sponsor Mrs. Kate Staples Lehrer completed the time-honored tradition and authenticated the keel of Wichita (LCS 13). Mrs. Lehrer had her initials welded into a sheet of the ship's steel, which will ultimately be mounted in the ship throughout its entire service.

"This is an honor and a pleasure for me to be a sponsor of the USS Wichita," said Lehrer. "My right hand will remain forever in a salute to those men and women who are building and to those who will serve on this special ship."

Wichita is a flexible Freedom-variant LCS that will be designed and outfitted with mission systems to conduct a variety of missions including anti-surface warfare, mine countermeasures and submarine warfare. The industry team building Wichita has delivered two ships with six others in various stages of construction and testing. The nation's first LCS, USS Freedom, completed a U.S. Navy deployment in 2013, and USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) is currently deployed for 16 months to Southeast Asia. These two deployments demonstrate how the ship class is addressing the U.S. Navy's need for an affordable, highly-networked and modular ship unlike any other in the world.

"This ship class, and the industry team behind it, has shown it can adapt to meet the Navy's most challenging missions and provide a powerful, modular platform," said Joe North, vice president of Littoral Ships and Systems at Lockheed Martin. "We have leveraged best practices and incorporated improvements based on sailors' feedback to ensure the fleet is prepared and empowered to fight, operate and support the ship in the littorals and open seas worldwide."

The Lockheed Martin-led LCS team includes ship builder Marinette Marine Corporation, a Fincantieri company, naval architect Gibbs & Cox, as well as nearly 900 suppliers in 43 states.

"The LCS 13, Wichita, is a tangible measure of the collaboration and strength within this industry team," said Jan Allman, president and chief executive officer of Marinette Marine Corporation. "I'm extremely proud of our skilled workforce, the hardworking men and women that transform the LCS from a design into a powerful warship that will serve an invaluable role in the Fleet. Through Fincantieri's expansion and improvement in our facility, Marinette Marine was tailored to grow with this program, and we look forward to continuing our valuable partnership with the Navy."

Lay the keel is a shipbuilding term that marks the beginning of the module erection process, which is a significant undertaking that signifies the ship coming to life. Modern warships are now largely built in a series of pre-fabricated, complete hull sections rather than a single keel, so the actual start of the shipbuilding process is now considered to be when the first sheet of steel is cut and is often marked with a ceremonial event.

About Lockheed Martin

Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that employs approximately 112,000 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 net sales for 2014 were $45.6 billion.

About Marinette Marine
Founded in 1942, Marinette Marine Corporation (MMC) is located on the Menominee River flowage into Green Bay. The largest shipyard in Wisconsin and the Midwest, MMC has delivered more than 1,300 vessels for the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and commercial customers, including the technologically advanced Littoral Combat Ship Freedom variant for the U.S. Navy. In 2008, MMC along with several sister shipyards also based in the Great Lakes region, became part of FINCANTIERI SpA, the largest shipbuilder in the western Hemisphere and world leader in diversification and presence in every high value-added market sector. FINCANTIERI operates in the United States through its subsidiary Fincantieri Marine Group, serving both civilian and government customers. Over the past five years, FINCANTIERI invested more than $100 million in both capital infrastructure and its resources to support MMC's transformation into what is now one of the best shipyards in the United States. Employing approximately 1,400 employees, today MMC is a state-of-the-art, full service new construction shipyard.

About Gibbs & Cox
Gibbs & Cox, the nation's leading independent maritime solutions firm specializing in naval architecture, marine engineering and design, is headquartered in Arlington, Va. The company, founded in 1929, has provided designs for nearly 80 percent of the current U.S. Navy surface combatant fleet; approaching 7,000 naval and commercial ships have been built to Gibbs & Cox designs.

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