Lockheed Martin-Led Team Lays Keel On Nation's Fifteenth Littoral Combat Ship

Sponsor Sharla Tester Completes Time-Honored Tradition for Future USS Billings

MARINETTE, Wis., Nov. 2, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- The Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT)-led industry team officially laid the keel for the U.S. Navy's fifteenth Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), the future USS Billings, in a ceremony held at Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, Wisconsin.

Ship sponsor Sharla D. Tester completed the time-honored tradition and authenticated the keel of Billings (LCS 15). Mrs. Tester had her initials welded into a sheet of the ship's steel, which will ultimately be mounted in the ship throughout its entire service.

"It is an honor to serve as sponsor of the future USS Billings. My prayers are with the industry's shipbuilding team and the future crew," Tester said. "This will be a magnificent warship, and I know the people of Billings, and all Montanans, will proudly support her when she enters the Navy fleet to protect our nation."

Billings is a flexible Freedom-variant LCS that will be designed and outfitted with systems to conduct a variety of missions. The industry team building Billings has delivered three ships with seven others in various stages of construction and testing. The future USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) will be commissioned in Milwaukee on November 21.

The nation's first LCS, USS Freedom, completed a U.S. Navy deployment in 2013, and USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) is in the midst of her 20-month deployment to Southeast Asia.

"The LCS platform is proving the Navy's concept of operations with its flexibility in supporting a broad range of missions, from anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare to mine countermeasures," said Joe North, vice president of Littoral Ships and Systems at Lockheed Martin. "This industry has shown it can adapt to meet the Navy's most challenging missions, anywhere in the world."

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

"We are proud to welcome Mrs. Sharla Tester, sponsor of the LCS 15 Billings, to Fincantieri Marinette Marine," said Jan Allman, president and CEO of Fincantieri Marinette Marine. "LCS 15 is the next ship to make the journey through our shipyard before joining the Fleet, and will carry the spirit of Billings and this dedicated industry team, as she sails the globe."

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.

For additional information, visit our website: www.lockheedmartin.com/us/products/littoral-combat-ship.html

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 Fincantieri Marinette Marine
Founded in 1942, Fincantieri Marinette Marine (FMM) is located on the Menominee River flowage into Green Bay. The largest shipyard in the Midwest, MMC has delivered more than 1,300 vessels to 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, FMM along with several sister shipyards also based in the Great Lakes region, became part of FINCANTIERI, the largest shipbuilder in the western Hemisphere and world leader in diversification and presence in every high value-added market sector, with 21,700 employees, of whom around 7,700 are located in Italy, and 21 shipyards on four continents. FINCANTIERI operates inthe 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 FMM's transformation into what is now one of the best shipyards in the United States. Employing approximately 1,500 employees, today FMM is a state-of-the-art, full service new construction shipyard.

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