Arleigh Burke Program Pushes Ahead, With First Two Flight III Ships Under Contract

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The DDG 51 program is moving ahead rapidly, with 12 ships under contract, including the first two of the substantially improved Flight III ships, the program manager said April 10.

The detail design on Flight III is "just about done and we're on track to start construction," with work on DDG 125 expected to start at Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) in May, and DDG 126 at Bath Iron Works later this year, said Capt. Casey Moton. "We have a good, stable design" that was approved by both yards last year with fixed-price contracts.

The major change for Flight III is the AN/SPY-6 Air and Missile Defense Radar (AMDR) "which will bring a significant improvement in missile defense," Moton told a Naval Sea Systems Command briefing at the Sea-Air-Space Exposition.

The Flight III design also required some "enabling changes" needed to accommodate the combat changes and to restore life expectancy margins to match the current Arleigh Burke destroyers, he said.

Those included expansion of the deck house, widening the hull above the water line to improve stability and thicker "inner-bottom scantling" to increase hull strength and to lower the center of gravity to offset the heavier SPY-6 radar antenna, he said. The design also included a major increase in air conditioning capacity and electrical energy, to support the more powerful radar.

Integrating the AMDR with the Aegis combat system "is going smoothly" with tests in Hawaii and elsewhere, he said.

The cost of the new class of ships is expected to be $1.7 billion to $1.75 billion for the first ships, which is expected to drop with later ships, as has happened throughout the DDG 51 program, Moton said.

The program office now is focusing on executing the latest multi-year production contract, which will buy 22 ships through fiscal 2023, he said. That contract calls for three ships a year for each year, except 2020.

A total of 65 Burkes have been delivered, with another about to transfer to the Navy, Moton said.