

ArmorWorks Enterprises Announces Acquisition of Fox Valley Metal-Tech

CHANDLER, AZ, March 14, 2024 – [ArmorWorks Enterprises](#), LLC (“ArmorWorks”), a portfolio company of Littlejohn Capital, LLC, announced today the acquisition of Fox Valley Metal-Tech, Incorporated (“Fox Valley”), a provider of complex, precision metal fabrications for use on naval ships, submarines, combat vessels, and other critical defense applications.

Founded in 1989 and based in Green Bay, WI, Fox Valley specializes in complex metal fabrications primarily for the U.S. Department of Defense (“DoD”), as well as commercial industries. The company manufactures custom electrical enclosures and consoles, components and fabrications for military trailers, radar systems as well as watertight doors and hatches. Fox Valley actively supports leading defense industry companies, and its precision components and fabrications are incorporated on the latest naval platforms such as the Ford-class aircraft carrier and Columbia-class submarine, amongst others. The company has a state-of-the-art 185,000 square foot facility that enables it to meet the highest of quality standards. For more information, visit www.fvmt.com.

Kevin Dahlin, Chief Executive Officer of ArmorWorks, commented, “Fox Valley’s components meet the Navy’s stringent requirements, and combine unique fabrication, machining, precision welding, and painting/finishing capabilities to provide customers with a vertically-integrated manufacturing solution in compliance with the highest U.S. military standards. Fox Valley’s fabrications are trusted on high priority naval programs amid a historical fleet expansion, and we look forward to supplementing our existing business with

the addition of Fox Valley's superior products."

Angus Littlejohn III, President of Littlejohn Capital, said, "Fox Valley's focus on mission-critical Naval systems instantly propels ArmorWorks into a broader segment of the DoD. The acquisition also adds impressive manufacturing capabilities in the Midwest expanding the geographic reach of ArmorWorks. Fox Valley is a trusted partner to the defense industry, and we are proud to add this company as an integral part of ArmorWorks as they continue to protect the military personnel who defend our country."

Steve Corbeille, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Fox Valley, added, "Fox Valley has built its business and reputation over the past 25 years by developing products whose standards are designed to withstand the harshest conditions. Fox Valley will continue to thrive and better serve its customers as part of a larger organization within ArmorWorks."

KAL Capital served as exclusive financial advisor to Fox Valley.

Navy to Christen Submarine Idaho

MARCH 15, 2024

The Navy will christen its newest Virginia-class attack submarine, the future USS Idaho (SSN 799), during a 10 a.m. EDT ceremony March 16, at General Dynamics Electric Boat, in Groton, Connecticut.

The Honorable Nickolas H. Guertin, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (ASN) for Research, Development, and Acquisition (RDA), will deliver the ceremony's principal address. Senior representatives from the Navy, the shipbuilders, Congress, and the state of Idaho are also expected to speak.

In a twist on the time-honored Navy tradition of breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow, the Submarine's Sponsor, Ms. Teresa Stackley, will christen the boat with water she has collected from several lakes in Idaho. Stackley is the daughter of a Navy Sailor and is the spouse of the Honorable Sean Stackley, a former Naval officer who served as ASN (RDA) from 2008 to 2017.

The submarine, which began construction in 2017, will be the 26th Virginia-class fast attack submarine and the fifth U.S. Navy ship to be christened with the name Idaho. The last ship named Idaho was battleship BB 42, commissioned in 1919.

Though landlocked, the state of Idaho prides itself in its rich Naval history and continuing contributions to the fleet. The Navy's Acoustic Research Detachment on Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho's largest and deepest body of water, is a state-of-the-art facility that supports research, development, testing, and evaluation of submarine acoustic stealth technology and propulsor design. Lake Pend Oreille is a critical body of water to the U.S. Submarine Force.

Virginia-class submarines are built to operate in the world's littoral and deep waters while conducting anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface ship warfare; strike warfare; special operations forces support; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; irregular warfare; and mine warfare missions. This next-generation attack submarine provides the Navy with the capabilities required to maintain the nation's undersea superiority well into the 21st century.

March 14 Red Sea Update



RED SEA (March 05, 2024) An F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 131 and an F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to VFA-105 prepare for launch aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) in the Red Sea, March 5, 2024. The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations to support maritime security and stability in the Middle East region. (Official U.S. Navy photo)

USCENTCOM, March 14, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 6:50 a.m. on March 14 and 12:40 a.m. on March 15 (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Gulf of Aden and two additional ASBMs towards the Red Sea. There were no injuries

or damage reported to U.S. or coalition ships.

Additionally, United States Central Command successfully engaged and destroyed nine anti-ship missiles and two unmanned aerial vehicles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) Returns Home From 8-month Deployment



CAMP LEJEUNE, NC, UNITED STATES

12.03.2024

Story by [Capt. Angelica White](#)

[26th Marine Expeditionary Unit \(Special Operations Capable\)](#) — —

Marines and Sailors assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) will return home in several waves beginning Mar. 16, 2024 after successfully completing an extended eight-month deployment embarked aboard the amphibious warships of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (BATARG) in U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa/6th Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/5th Fleet areas of operations.

The BATARG is comprised of the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19), and the Harpers Ferry class dock landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50).

Upon leaving the east coast of North Carolina for deployment in July 2023, the Secretary of Defense directed the BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) to support operations in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in response to attempts by Iran to threaten the free flow of commerce in the Arabian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. The 26th MEU(SOC) took deliberate actions to task-organize an element aboard the USS Mesa Verde with the appropriate staff depth and operational capabilities to execute operations and activities in support of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) theater security objectives, while the majority of the 26th MEU(SOC) Marine Air-Ground Task Force, embarked aboard USS Bataan and USS Carter Hall, was postured in USCENTCOM to deter Iranian malign activity and increase maritime security in the waters surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

The 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit's deployment marked the first time the U.S. Marine Corps and II Marine Expeditionary

Force were able to certify and employ a special operations capable Marine Expeditionary Unit in over two decades. This historical milestone demonstrated the Marine Corps' commitment to joint naval integration and partnering with forward-deployed special operations forces in support of crisis response and Fleet campaigning priorities, reinforced throughout the 26th MEU(SOC)'s voyage with the BATARG.

Throughout the deployment, the 26th MEU(SOC) executed distributed operations spanning across the Tri-Geographic Combatant Command to include USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, and USCENTCOM, contributing to increased maritime security and regional stability, while also participating in activities with Allies and partners to enhance mil-to-mil relationships, showcase interoperability, and sustain high operational readiness.

In the High North, the Marines and Sailors of the 26th MEU(SOC), embarked aboard USS Mesa Verde participated in bilateral exercises with elements of the Norwegian Brigade North and Italian partners to exchange tactics, techniques, and procedures in the coastal regions and littorals.

While operating in the Baltics, the 26th MEU(SOC) participated in Exercise Northern Coasts, a German, multi-national naval exercises series in the Baltic region, aimed at delivering realistic, live training for a broad range of amphibious operations. The 26th MEU(SOC)'s participation in Exercise Northern Coasts marked the first time U.S. Marine Corps forces participated in this large-scale NATO-exercise.

Concurrently, in USCENTCOM, the Marines and Sailors of the 26th MEU(SOC), embarked aboard USS Bataan and USS Carter Hall participated in a series of bilateral exercises with the Kuwaiti Marine Corps, Bahrain Royal Marines, and the Bahrain Royal Air Force. Additionally, the BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) supported Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Prosperity

Guardian. Moreover, the 26th MEU(SOC) showcased an ability to integrate and partner with other forward-deployed Special Operations Forces within the littorals as a part of the MEU/SOF-I3 continuum and efforts to increase maritime security and stability while deterring any potential malign actors.

When the terrorist attacks against Israel on 7 Oct. dynamically changed the security environment across the region, the 26th MEU(SOC) rapidly transitioned from participating in a readiness and sustainment training exercise in Kuwait to posturing to rapidly respond to emergent operational requirements and to safeguard U.S. national interests within the Red Sea.

The Marines and Sailors of the 26th MEU(SOC), embarked aboard the three ships of the aggregated BATARG in the Mediterranean Sea, remained postured in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea from Dec. 28 to Mar. 1 as the immediate response force with the operational capabilities needed to provide leaders across the Geographic Combatant Command with options in USEUCOM and USCENTCOM. The 26th MEU(SOC) also conducted several enhanced interoperability training sustainment exercises with NATO Allies and partners in the Mediterranean Sea.

Through rapid planning, coordination, and execution, the BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) team successfully completed multinational training events with Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO), the United Kingdom, Türkiye, and NATO Maritime Group Two at the end of February prior to transiting towards the United States.

“History has proven the necessity of having forward-deployed Marines, embarked aboard amphibious ships. Over the past eight months, the Marines and Sailors of the 26th MEU(SOC) have showcased the value, utility, and unique all-domain operational capabilities you only find in a Marine Expeditionary Unit,” said Col. Dennis Sampson, Commanding

Officer of the 26th MEU(SOC). "When coupled together, the ARG and the MEU(SOC) form a flexible naval expeditionary force capable of reassuring our Allies and partners of our commitment to maritime security and capable of dominating within the littorals against any adversary in any clime or place."

From the High North of Norway, to the Baltics, to the Mediterranean, Horn of Africa, to the Middle East, the BATARG and the 26th MEU(SOC) successfully completed over 15 bilateral activities with over 30 NATO Allied and partner countries in Plymouth, United Kingdom; Narvik and Setermoen, Norway; Riga, Latvia; Dublin, Ireland; Cartagena, Spain; Athens, Chania, Volos, and Lidochorro, Greece; Dubai and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Manama, Bahrain; Saudi Arabia; Yemen; Kuwait; Lanarca, Cyprus. In addition to bilateral exercises, the BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) engaged with multiple representatives from embassies, ministries of defense, and local government, military, and civilian officials to strengthen relationships with NATO Allies and partners through in-person key leader engagements and subject matter expert exchanges, including ship tours, ceremonies and receptions, and community service projects during each port visit.

"Throughout our time in the U.S. 5th and U.S. 6th Fleet regions, the Sailors and Marines of the BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) showcased the unique capabilities that we bring as a response force to our Allies and partners," said Capt. Martin Robertson, Amphibious Squadron 8 Commodore. "Our presence in the Eastern Mediterranean was exactly what our Nation needed: an integrated Navy and Marine Corps force ready to respond when called upon."

The 26th MEU(SOC) serves as one of the United States' premier crisis response forces capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response, and limited contingency operations, to include enabling the introduction of follow-on

forces and designated special operations, in support of theater requirements of the Geographic Combatant Commander. The 26th MEU(SOC) serves as a premier stand-in force with the unique all-domain operational capabilities necessary to compete and win within the littorals and within the weapons engagement zones of an adversary in any clime or place.

“I am very proud of the steadfast professionalism of every Marine and Sailor assigned to the 26th MEU(SOC) and the BATARG. They have made a difference and highlighted the relevance of the ARG and MEU to our national security interests across the Tri-COCOM region,” Sampson said. “More so, I am truly grateful for the steadfast support from our 26th MEU(SOC) families and friends. I know they are proud of their Marine or Sailor and I know they are ready for our homecoming in a couple of weeks.”

The BATARG and 26th MEU(SOC) presence in the U.S. 6th Fleet and U.S. 5th Fleet areas of operation supported strategic objectives and contributed to regional security and stability, reassuring the United States commitment to Allies and partners in the High North, Baltics, Mediterranean, and Middle East. Coupled with the BATARG, the 26th MEU(SOC) showcased the value, utility, and operational flexibility a forward-deployed ARG-MEU provides Geographic Combatant Commanders.

From responding to contingencies to enhancing bilateral relations with key Allies and partners, the constant theme of the 26th MEU(SOC) was being ‘Ready, Relevant, and Capable’ of aggregating other joint, coalition, or special operations forces and deploying with limited notice in support of crises, expeditionary operations on land or from the sea, or other emergent operational requirements.

BAE Systems awarded U.S. Navy contract to continue supporting Mobile Deployable C5ISR programs



MCLEAN, Va. – March 14, 2024 – The U.S. Navy has awarded BAE Systems a contract worth approximately \$86 million to continue supporting its Mobile Deployable Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Combat Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (MDC5ISR) programs.

The five-year contract from the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command's Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division Webster Outlying Field Special Communications Mission Solutions Division will involve the company providing engineering and technical services for new and legacy MDC5ISR systems and platforms.

“As a leading systems integrator, our team brings an unmatched level of expertise to the program,” said Lisa Hand, Vice President and General Manager, BAE Systems Integrated Defense Solutions. “We have provided quick reaction, integrated C5ISR solutions on this program for more than 35 years and we are proud to continue our support to warfighters deployed around the globe.”

This follow-on contract includes support for a variety of MDC5ISR products including small craft, transportable systems, en-route communication systems, and intra-platform systems for the U.S. Navy, Special Operations Forces, Homeland Security, and for other Department of Defense (DoD) and non-DoD agencies.

The company will perform work in Lexington Park, Maryland; St. Inigoes, Maryland; and Little Creek, Virginia.

**USCGC Frederick Hatch
Supports Partners in
Micronesia, Republic of Palau
Under Operation Rematau**



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, March 14, 2024

SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) completed a significant operational patrol under Operation Rematau from Feb. 15 to March 4, 2024, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in the Pacific region.

“Frederick Hatch marked an important milestone in the U.S. Coast Guard’s relationship with our friends in Palau by pioneering the use of the recently signed enhanced bilateral agreement, and we look forward to deepening our ties with Palau’s Marine Law division going forward. The cutter’s first-ever visit to Tinian and participation in Yap Day were both very enjoyable ways to learn about the cultures of our neighboring islands while reflecting our commitment to

communities across the Pacific,” said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of USCGC Frederick Hatch.

The Frederick Hatch crew proudly represented the U.S. Coast Guard at the annual Pika Fest Celebration on Tinian, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and Yap Day in Colonia, Yap State, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Supporting local needs, they transported 1,500 lbs. of non-perishable food, 1,200 lbs. of water, and essential supplies, including fishing gear and tools, to Ulithi Atoll, FSM, during a state-declared emergency drought. The crew renewed the meaningful connection with the local community, engaging in direct support and sharing in the generosity and warmth of the island’s residents.

“The opportunity to contribute to the enduring partnership between the Ulithi community and the U.S. Coast Guard, rooted in World War II and grown throughout decades of collaboration, was a special experience for myself and the crew. Thank you to the local non-profit organizations we worked alongside, as the experience of supporting and visiting the people of Ulithi is one of the highlights of my career,” said Dreiss.

Further showcasing the spirit of cooperation and support, the Hatch’s crew organized a donation drive prior to sailing, collecting 40 bags of school supplies and clothing from the U.S. Coast Guard community in Guam and collaborated with the Ayuda Foundation and the Ulithi-based One People One Reef research foundation to facilitate these critical donations to the island.

“Today exemplifies the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that we hold dear here in Ulithi. It warms our hearts to hear that your short visit to our island was enjoyable, and we’re delighted that you appreciated the coconuts, bananas, and

flowers. Knowing that the bananas are adorning your ship's canopy, and the flowers are being proudly worn by your crew fills us with immense joy," said Ulithi Mayor John Rulmal.

Yap Day, observed annually on March 1, is a significant cultural and legal holiday in Yap State, one of the four states of the FSM. Established in 1968 and renamed in 1979, it celebrates Yapese culture, highlighting traditional skills and competitions, such as tattooing, fresh produce contests, and traditional games. The U.S. Coast Guard regularly attends, and the 2024 celebration was particularly special as Petty Officer 2nd Class Eugene Haliushlius, a native of Yap currently stationed in Guam, returned home aboard Frederick Hatch for the first time in years to participate, further symbolizing the deep connections between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Pacific communities served.

"Returning to Yap, I'm reminded of the values instilled in me: respect, humility, and the identity of being an islander. Coming from a family of navigators, we believe in the power of knowing your waypoints, a principle that guides us to success. Inspired by my brother Ken Raigeluw, who is also serving and driven by our service's unique opportunities and missions, this journey not only contributes to our collective mission but also my personal growth and family legacy," said Haliushlius.

The Frederick Hatch crew responded to a request from the government of Yap State for a U.S. Coast Guard presence near Ngulu Atoll to deter illegal sea cucumber poaching, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the region's marine resources and aiding partners. This patrol also marked the first-ever boarding under the Palau enhanced bilateral agreement, signed in August 2023, authorizing U.S. Coast Guard boarding officers to conduct boardings in Palau's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on the country's behalf without a Palauan officer present. While the crew found everything compliant

with international and Palauan requirements, the action set a precedent for further regional maritime law enforcement cooperation. It reinforces the trust and confidence of partners in the U.S. Coast Guard's role to ensure compliance with fishing regulations within partner EEZs.

The patrol also emphasized the need for continued vigilance in the Western Pacific. Not for the first time, the Frederick Hatch crew identified areas of concern for illegal fishing activities and non-compliance with maritime regulations wherein fishing vessels were observed not transmitting on AIS or VMS near the Palau EEZ border with the high seas.

"These efforts not only affirm our dedication to preserving the region's marine biodiversity but also reinforce the strong and enduring partnerships we have, particularly in support of our Compact of Free Association partners addressing shared security challenges and advancing mutual interests in the Blue Pacific," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. "Our partnership with local non-profits and the community in Guam exemplifies a holistic approach to strengthening the fabric of trust and mutual respect we've built over decades with Pacific Island communities and beyond as we face future challenges and opportunities together."

About Operation Rematau

Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast Guard endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It reinforces the U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S. national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime good governance and security.

About USCGC Frederick Hatch

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. Designed for many missions, including search and rescue, national defense, and maritime law enforcement, the Frederick Hatch crew plays a significant role in safeguarding national interests and preserving good maritime governance.

March 13 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 13, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 13, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one anti-ship ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Gulf of Aden. The missile did not impact any vessels and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command then successfully engaged and destroyed four unmanned aerial systems (UAVs) and one surface-to-air missile in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

French Air Force crew trains at U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point



U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, March 11, 2024

HONOLULU – A crew from the French Air Force arrived at Air Station Barbers Point on March 4, 2024, for a week-long subject matter exchange with U.S. Coast Guard aircrews.

The seven-member team, comprised of three pilots and four crew members, is stationed in French Polynesia, Tahiti, and flies a CN235 Casa aircraft; during their visit, they participated in various activities designed to enhance their aviation proficiency and build professional relationships with their Coast Guard counterparts.

On March 6, Commander Victor Yaguchi of Air Station Barbers Point provided the French aircrew with an in-depth briefing on

Coast Guard aircraft missions. This included an overview of Air Station Barbers Point airframes, capabilities, and mission sets. The briefing served as a foundation for the crew's training experiences throughout the week.

"This visit is a valuable opportunity to collaborate with our French allies and share best practices in aviation operations," said Captain Maurice Murphy, Commanding Officer of Air Station Barbers Point. "The partnerships in the Pacific are invaluable, we work closely with our French Allies and Joint Rescue Coordination Center Tahiti to rescue mariners at sea."

The French crew utilized the air station as their base of operations for the week and conducted flights throughout the Hawaiian Island chain. This exposure to a complex and busy airspace allowed them to refine their communication procedures and flight skills. They specifically focused on:

Air-to-Air and Air-to-Ground Communications: The crew honed their ability to communicate effectively in a congested airspace, a skillset critical for safe operations.

U.S. Flight Rules: The training familiarized the crew with U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, ensuring smooth integration into the local airspace.

Coast Guard Search and Rescue Operations: The crew gained insight into the Coast Guard's B-0 SAR response procedures, a vital capability for ensuring maritime safety in the vast Pacific Ocean.

The Hawaiian Islands provide the closest and busiest airspace to French Polynesia, making Air Station Barbers Point an ideal training location. This reinvigorated exchange program is expected to occur several annually, fostering continued collaboration and professional development between the U.S. Coast Guard and the French Air Force.

Upon arrival, the ASBP staff warmly welcomed the French crew and presented them with traditional kukui nut leis, symbolizing protection and peace. This gesture reflects the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that underpins this exchange program.

March 12 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 12, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 12, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one close-range ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon in the Red Sea. The missile did not impact the vessel and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command and a coalition vessel successfully engaged and destroyed two unmanned aerial systems (UAS) launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

F - 35 Program Achieves

Milestone C and Full-Rate Production

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MARCH 12, 2024

Earlier today, the Milestone Decision Authority, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Dr. William A. LaPlante, approved the Milestone C / Full-Rate Production (MSC/FRP) of the F-35 Lightning II aircraft with the signing of an Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM) after a meeting with the Defense Acquisition Board (DAB).

The F-35 achieved this milestone after considering the results from the F-35 Combined Initial Operational Test and Evaluation and Live Fire Test and Evaluation Report, System Development and Demonstration exit criteria, statutory/regulatory documentation compliance, future production strategy, and draft acquisition program baseline details. Proceeding to MSC/FRP requires control of the manufacturing process, acceptable performance and reliability, and the establishment of adequate sustainment and support systems.

The DAB, which met on March 7, 2024, was chaired by Dr. LaPlante, and is the department's senior-level forum for critical decisions concerning acquisition programs at the Department of Defense.

"This is a major achievement for the F-35 Program," LaPlante said. "This decision—backed by my colleagues in the Department—highlights to the Services, F-35 Cooperative Program Partners, and Foreign Military Sales customers that the F-35 is stable and agile, and that all statutory and regulatory requirements have been appropriately addressed. The F-35 Program is the premier system that drives interoperability with our allies and partners while contributing to the integrated deterrence component of our

National Defense Strategy.”

With this milestone, the program is now well positioned to efficiently produce and deliver the next generation of aircraft to meet the evolving needs of our services, partners, and FMS customers.

“I am very proud of our team, and this is a huge accomplishment!” said Lt. Gen. Mike Schmidt, Director and Program Executive Officer, F-35 Joint Program Office. “The F-35 enterprise has made significant improvements over the last decade, and we will always be driven to continuously improve sustainability, interoperability, and lethality so warfighters have the capability needed to fight and win when called to do so. Moreover, the Program and our great people can now focus on the future of the F-35 instead of the past.”

In September 2023, a key gateway for MS C/FRP was achieved when F-35 Runs for Score in the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) and initial trial validation were completed.

“DOT&E conducted analysis of the results from Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E) and Live Fire Test and Evaluation and delivered a comprehensive, combined report as required by statute to inform the Milestone C / Full Rate Production decision. DOT&E also provided a separate annex that assessed post-IOT&E Block 4 operational testing of the 30P06 and 30P07 software.” said Dr. Raymond D. O’Toole, Jr., Acting Director, Operational Test & Evaluation. “The Program is working to address DOT&E’s findings and recommendations contained in the report. One of DOT&E’s concerns is to continue to improve test infrastructure for support development and to ensure readiness to test of the upcoming Block 4 capabilities. This includes timely deliveries of the next iterations of F-35-In-A-Box for integration into the JSE.”

Achieving MSC/FRP is important to the program, and it helps to

validate the aircraft's capabilities for present and future partners of the F-35 enterprise.

To date, over 990 F-35 aircraft have been delivered to the U.S. Services, F-35 Cooperative Program Partners, and Foreign Military Sales customers.

The F-35 offers multi-mission capability, including strategic attack, suppression/destruction of enemy air defenses (SEAD/DEAD), offensive/defensive counter air, anti-surface warfare, strike coordination and reconnaissance, and close air support. It brings stealth, sensor fusion, and interoperability to enable access in contested environments and enhances situational awareness.