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By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy has awarded a contract to a shipbuilder for materials and engineering activities for the first four Block 1 medium landing ships (LSMs).

“Marinette Marine Corp., Marinette, Wisconsin, is awarded a $30,000,000 not-to-exceed undefinitized contract action for advance procurement of long lead time material and associated engineering and design activities in support of four Medium Landing Ship Block 1,” the Department of War said in an April 14 contract announcement.

Marinette Marine Corp. is a unit of Fincantieri Marine Group FMG), which also is building two Constellation-class guided-missile frigates for the U.S. Navy. The Naval Sea Systems Command obligated $15 million of fiscal 2025 funda at the time of the contract award.

The Navy plans to procure 35 LSMs to support the Marine Corps’ expeditionary advance base operations.

“Enhancing our maritime dominance depends on a modernized fleet and a strong industrial base, and today’s contract helps with both — it reduces schedule risk and enables our shipbuilders to rapidly transition to ship construction,” said Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan in a post on X that also announced the contract award.

“Work will be performed in Marinette, Wisconsin (46%); De Pere, Wisconsin (39%); and Kenner, Louisiana (15%),” the Department of War’s announcement said. “Work is expected to be completed by September 2027.”

In December 2025, the Navy and Marine Corps jointly announced Damen Naval’s LST 100 landing ship would serve as the baseline

to field a “proven, non-developmental design – would serve as the baseline to help rapidly field LSM capability,” according to the Naval Sea Systems Command. “The LSM will fill the capability gap between smaller, short-range landing craft and the Navy’s long-duration, multi-purpose amphibious warfare ships. It is essential for the maneuver and sustainment of Marine forces, providing the critical littoral mobility required in contested environments. The program will deliver a 35-ship fleet that enhances expeditionary agility and supports the Marine Corps’ concept of distributed maneuver and logistics.”

Key points made in Fincantieri’s follow-up email announcement included the following:

- The contract supports long-lead materials procurement and early engineering and production readiness activities, enabling a potential start of construction as early as Q4 2026.

- The LSM program is a foundational element of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps force design, with up to 35 vessels planned; FMG is designated to build at least the initial four.

- The award builds on more than $800 million in U.S. shipyard investments by Fincantieri over the past decade, supporting long-term naval and industrial capacity.