Navy Frigate Manager: Practices Reducing Acquisition Timeline By 6 Years

WASHINGTON –
A disciplined set of practices by the U.S. Navy's frigate program office
enabled the planned acquisition timeline for the new ship to be shortened by
six years over what a new warship normally might have taken.

Regan Campbell, program manager for the FFG(X) guided-missile frigate
program, speaking June 20 in Washington at the Technology, Systems and Ships
Symposium of the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE), said the practices
wouldn't necessarily work in all acquisitions but the frigate program became a
proving ground for early engagement with industry and setting clear
requirements.

Campbell said the program office leveraged previous analyses of
alternatives to accelerate the process and set the stage for clear shipbuilder
requirements. The requirement for bidders to use a parent ship design as a
basis for their proposals greatly shortened the timeline, avoiding the need for
a "clean-sheet" design. A parallel requirements evaluation process instead of a

serial process also saved some time.

By design, the frigate will make use of command mature government-furnished equipment (GFE), particularly weapons, sensors and combat systems that already have been developed but will contribute to cost savings by being common with systems on other classes of ships.

Use of GFE, Campbell said, “allows us to shorten our combat systems integration time.”

Early engagement with industry also saved time and produced ideas for the program. Campbell said the Frigate Affordability Board received more than 350 ideas to modify the ship specifications and the Capabilities Definition Document.

“We accepted over 60% of the industry ideas,” Campbell said.

The Navy released the Request for Proposals for the FFG(X) on June 20.

Four companies are expected to submit bids for the FFG(X) program: Huntington Ingalls, Fincantieri Marine, General Dynamics Bath Iron Works and Austal USA. The builder of the Freedom-class littoral combat ship, Lockheed Martin, participated in the program until recently but dropped out. The competition is open to other bidders that can meet the requirements.