Navy Orders 15th Expeditionary Fast Transport from Austal



Expeditionary Fast Transport vessels, USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1), USNS Choctaw County (T-EPF 2) and USNS Fall River (T-EPF 4) shown at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in this 2015 photo. U.S. Navy / Brian Suriani

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Austal USA a contract to build the 15th Spear-head-class expeditionary fast transport (EPF).

The Naval Sea Systems Command awarded Austal a $235 million "undefinitized" contract action modification on Feb. 26, 2021, for the detailed design and construction of EPF 15, the company said in a release.

The EPF, designated T-EPF in service to the Military Sealift Command, originally was designated a joint high-speed vessel,

but has proven versatile in performing a number of roles in support of regional combatant commanders. Those roles have included humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime security, surveillance, command and control, and counter narcotics, among others.

“With a draft of only 13 feet and waterjet propulsion, the EPF is able to access austere and degraded ports with minimal external assistance providing flexibility to fleet and combatant commanders,” the Austal release said. “With its maneuverability, large open mission bay and ability to achieve speeds greater-than 35-knots, the EPFs have the capability to support additional missions such as special operations and medical support.”

The Spearhead class originally was intended to be 10 ships: five for the U.S. Army and five for the Navy. The five Army ships later were reallocated to the Navy. The lead ship was delivered in December 2012. As the utility and success of the ships was demonstrated in operations, Congress has approved an increase in the number of hulls authorized, now at 15 ships. Austal has delivered 12 to the Military Sealift Command to date.

EPF 15, like EPFs 13 and 14, will include an expeditionary medical capability. The EPFs are operated by civilian mariners of the Military Sealift Command.

“At its core, the EPF is designed to be highly capable, flexible and affordable,” said Rusty Murdaugh, Austal USA’s chief financial officer and interim president. “With this baseline, we’ve been able to deliver multiple ships that are performing different missions for the U.S. military. The award of EPF 15 allows the Navy to leverage a hot production line and highly trained workforce to continue producing ships that are meeting the needs of warfighters today and into the future.”