

L3Harris Wins NGJ-LB Development Contract for 2nd Time

By Richard Scott

NAVAIR has selected L3Harris (Salt Lake City, UT) to develop the Next Generation Jammer- Low Band (NGJ-LB) airborne electronic attack pod for the second time of asking.

In late August, NAVAIR awarded the company a \$587.4 million contract for the NGJ-LB engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) phase. Designed to equip US Navy and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) EA-18G Growler aircraft, and forming part of a larger NGJ suite that will augment and replace the ageing AN/ALQ-99 Tactical Jamming System, the NGJ-LB system is a joint cooperative program between the US Department of Defense and the Australian Department of Defence.

NAVAIR originally awarded the NGJ-LB development contract to L3Harris back in December 2020. However, multiple protests by losing bidder Northrop Grumman were upheld by the Government Accountability Office, forcing the Navy to annul the EMD contract award in 2022 and release an amended request for proposals last year.

Under the terms of the new contract, L3Harris will be responsible for the design, production and delivery of electronic warfare test articles and fleet prototypes to include 11 pod simulators, eight operational prototype pods, four jettison mass model pods, two captive mass models, two mission system prototypes, and two technique development systems. The company will also provide engineering support, integration, test and maintenance support.

NGJ-LB is scheduled to achieve early operational capability in 2029, said NAVAIR. The capability, which is specifically designed to disrupt, deny and degrade low-band air defense radars and communications, will operate in concert with the EA-18G's upgraded ALQ-218 ESM receiver and onboard mission computers to provide the ability to effectively engage multiple enemy threats from increased stand-off distances. A single pod – using advanced digital and active electronically scanned array technologies – will be carried on the EA-18G's centerline hardpoint (weapon station 6).

Australia, already a partner on the AN/ALQ-249(V)1 NGJ-Mid Band program, in July 2020 extended the scope of the project arrangement to additionally include the NGJ-LB system. The RAAF originally acquired 12 EA-18G Growler aircraft under Project Air 5349 Phase 3: a thirteenth aircraft was delivered in February 2023 as a replacement for an EA-18G written off in early 2018 as a result of an engine explosion and subsequent fire