

NRL Reveals Continued Development of AN/SLQ-59 Shipborne EA System

The US Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) has detailed continued spiral development of the US Navy's AN/SLQ-59(V) shipborne electronic attack (EA) system under an existing Surface Electronic Warfare Embarkable Prototype System (EPS) Development Indefinite-Delivery, Indefinite-Quantity (IDIQ) contract with L3Harris NexGen Communication.

In a solicitation notice issued in late May, NRL requested an increase in the maximum ordering quantity/amount increase to cover design, development and installation of improved AN/SLQ-59(V)2 and (V)3 variants, plus delivery of SLQ-59(V)4 engineering design modules (EDMs). The proposed uplift in the cost ceiling reflects escalation attributable to the complexity of technology development to meet fleet requirements.

Derived from the Transportable Electronic Warfare Module developed by NRL's Tactical Electronic Warfare Division, the original AN/SLQ-59(V)1 EA system was introduced to US Navy service in 2014 to address an Urgent Operational Needs Statement (UONS) raised by the Seventh Fleet. The nature of the threat identified in the UONS has not been disclosed, but is believed to be connected to a specific class of Chinese anti-ship missile that has proliferated in the western Pacific theater.

AN/SLQ-59(V)1 installations – discernible by twin barrel-shaped antennas – have been observed on DDG 51 guided-missile destroyers (DDGs), CG 59 guided missile cruisers (CGs) and CVN 68 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. While NRL took responsibility for the design and initial prototyping of the

AN/SLQ-59(V)1 system, L3Harris (the former ITT Exelis Electronic Systems business) was contracted in 2013 to provide engineering design, fabrication, and installation support to meet performance objectives and fleet schedule requirements.

It has now emerged that L3Harris is working with NRL to develop updated follow-on variants under a sole-source IDIQ contract awarded in November 2021. The statement of work for this program includes AN/SLQ-59(V)2 and (V)3 design, development, fabrication and installation; system requirements definition; design documentation; technical data packages; line replaceable units (LRUs); a system prototype; configuration management; and fabrication and delivery of two AN/SLQ-59(V)4 EDMs; and the fabrication and delivery of eight AN/SLQ-59(V)4 embarkable systems (configurations for DDGs and CGs).

NRL said it plans to raise the cost ceiling on its IDIQ with L3Harris to cover cost increases over and above the original maximum ordering quantity/amount estimated in 2021 when the system design was still being developed. "The requested increase to the maximum ordering quantity/amount is necessary due to the increased program costs of the government," it stated. "The complexity of the final design requires a significantly larger cost per unit, which directly correlates to an increase in labor and material costs."

According to the NRL, the requested maximum ordering quantity/amount increase will be primarily used to support delivery of eight SLQ-59 (V)2 and (V)3 EPS systems to address emergent threats while maintaining current operational capabilities. It will also provide sustained engineering support for refurbishment of eight sets of embarkables, to include rotatable removal, rehabilitation and re-installation.

– R. Scott