US Navy Spectral Program Achieves Milestone C

By Richard Scott

The US Navy's next-generation Spectral information warfare suite has passed its Milestone C acquisition review, marking the program's transition into its low-rate initial production (LRIP) and deployment phase.

Announcing the milestone, Spectral lead contractor **CACI International** (Reston, Va.) said the program "has successfully completed rigorous review by the US Navy's Program Executive Office for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (PEO C4I)". Spectral comes under the purview of PEO C4I's Program Manager Warfare Battlespace Awareness and Information Operations Program Office (PMW 120).

Being procured as successor to the Ship's Signal Exploitation Equipment (SSEE) Increment F surface cryptologic system, Spectral is an information warfare suite intended to provide US Navy carrier and expeditionary strike groups with an advanced signals tasking, acquisition, collection, processing, dissemination, and exploitation capability. According to the Navy, the system will provide "scalable, mission-configurable, and modular capabilities using a common user interface through an open software architecture to allow rapid integration and deployment of special-use capabilities satisfying navy and joint maritime intelligence requirements beyond what existing systems can provide."

CACI, leading an industry team also including **Northrop Grumman**, **Raytheon Technologies**, **BAE Systems**, **Sierra Nevada Corporation** and **Dell Technologies**, was in June 2023 awarded a seven-year indefinite delivery indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract, valued at up to $1.2 billion, to develop and deliver

Spectral. According to CACI, Spectral’s open architecture model is designed to enable the accelerated fielding of new capabilities through modular software-based insertions, such as enhanced signal recognition and parameter characterization, while at the same time promoting a new enterprise model that reduces dependencies on a single vendor.

To generate evidence for Milestone C, CACI and PMW 120 executed several Iterative Capability Tests proving the functionality of the system. Spectral has a 15-month production lead time with system delivery and installation aligned to ship availability.

Fiscal Year 2026 is the first year of procurement for full Spectral systems at LRIP quantities. Prior to this, initial functionality is being delivered through a one-off buy of Spectral Enabling Kits (SEKs) that upgrade existing SSEE Increment F platforms. Under its IDIQ, CACI was in May 2025 awarded a $143 million firm-fixed-price limited production order for the supply of 11 SEKs that will deliver 72% of overall Spectral capability requirements.