



CRS Report for Congress

Navy Aegis Cruiser and Destroyer Modernization: Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

The Navy wants to modernize 84 Aegis cruisers and destroyers over a period of more than 20 years at a total cost of billions of dollars. The modernizations are intended to ensure that the ships can be operated cost-effectively throughout their entire intended service lives. The program poses several potential issues for Congress. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Background

Aegis Cruisers and Destroyers. The Navy's current cruisers and destroyers are called Aegis ships because they are equipped with the Aegis combat system — an integrated combination of sensors, weapons, computers, software, and display systems that was named for the mythological shield carried by Zeus. The Aegis ships are multi-mission ships for conducting missions such as air defense (which the Navy calls anti-air warfare), ballistic missile defense (BMD), anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, naval surface fire support for forces ashore, and Tomahawk cruise missile strikes.

The Navy's Aegis ships include Ticonderoga (CG-47) class cruisers and Arleigh Burke (DDG-51) class destroyers. A total of 27 CG-47s were procured for the Navy between FY1978 and FY1988; the ships entered service between 1983 and 1994. The first five, which were built to an earlier technical standard, were judged by the Navy to be too expensive to modernize and were removed from service in 2004-2005. The Navy plans to keep the remaining 22 ships in service to age 35.

A total of 62 DDG-51s were procured for the Navy between FY1985 and FY2005; the first entered service in 1991, 52 were in service as of the end of FY2007, and the 62nd is scheduled to enter service in 2011. The Navy until recently had planned to keep them in service to age 35, but is now considering extending their service lives to 40 years.

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Between 2011, when the 62nd DDG-51 enters service, and 2021, when the first of the 22 remaining CG-47s reaches age 35, the Navy plans to maintain a force of 84 Aegis ships — 22 cruisers and 62 destroyers. These 84 ships equate to about 27%, or more than one-quarter, of the Navy’s planned total force of 313 ships.¹ Aegis ships are to account for the majority of the Navy’s cruiser-destroyer force until about 2032, and the last of the 84 ships are to remain in service into the 2040s.

Major Contractors for Navy Surface Combatants. The builders of the 84 Aegis ships are General Dynamics’ Bath Iron Works (GD/BIW) of Bath, ME (7 CG-47s and 34 DDG-51s), and the Ingalls shipyard of Pascagoula, MS, that forms part of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, or NGSB (15 CG-47s and 28 DDG-51s). Several U.S. shipyards maintain and repair Aegis ships, with much of the work done under multi-ship/multi-option (MSMO) contracts. Under a MSMO contract, a shipyard is responsible for conducting depot-level maintenance work on several ships in a class.

The primary contractor for the Aegis system is Lockheed Martin’s Maritime Systems & Sensors division of Moorestown, NJ. Lockheed and the firms that previously owned the Moorestown facility have been the primary Aegis contractor since the 1970s. Other makers of Navy surface ship combat systems include Raytheon, the maker of, among other things, the combat system for the Navy’s new DDG-1000 class destroyers, and General Dynamics, the maker of the combat system for the General Dynamics version of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).²

Purpose of Modernization. A primary objective of the Aegis ship modernization effort is to improve the ships’ combat capabilities so that the ships will remain mission-effective to the end of their intended service lives. A second major objective is to make the ships less expensive to operate, maintain, and modernize over the remainder of their lives. The modernization itself is not intended to extend the ships’ expected lives from 35 years to some higher figure, such as 40 years. Additional maintenance work would be needed to extend the ships’ lives to 40 years or some other higher figure.

Planned Modernization Work. The Navy’s Aegis ship modernization plan includes modernization of the ships’ basic hull, mechanical, and electrical (HM&E) equipment, and modernization of their combat systems. In both areas, the Navy plans to install new systems or components that are more capable than the ones they are to replace. Some of the planned changes are intended to permit the ships to be operated with a smaller crew, thereby reducing their annual operation and support (O&S) costs. Planned changes to the ships’ combat systems are intended to, among other things, begin shifting their Aegis computers and software to a more open architecture (OA), meaning, in general terms, an arrangement that uses non-proprietary computers and software. The Navy believes that moving to an Aegis open architecture will permit the Aegis system to be

¹ For more on the Navy’s planned 313-ship fleet, see CRS Report RL32665, *Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O’Rourke.

² For more on the DDG-1000 and LCS programs program, see CRS Report RL32109, *Navy DDG-1000 and DDG-51 Destroyer Programs: Background, Oversight Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O’Rourke, and CRS Report RL33741, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program: Oversight Issues and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O’Rourke.

updated over the remainder of the ships' lives more easily and less expensively, using contributions from a variety of firms.

In August 2008, it was reported that the Navy has decided to expand the scope of the DDG-51 modernization program to include the installation of a BMD capability, so that all DDG-51s would eventually be BMD-capable, and that the Navy has not committed to similarly expanding the scope of the CG-47 modernization program due to financial constraints.³ Equipping all DDG-51s with a BMD capability would significantly expand the previous program of record for sea-based BMD platforms, which called for a total of 18 Aegis ships (3 CG-47s and 15 DDG-51s) to be BMD-capable.⁴

Cost. The Navy estimated in 2007 that modernizing the first 8 CG-47s would cost an average of about \$221 million per ship. **Table 1** shows annual funding for the Aegis ship modernization program for FY2005-FY2009.

Table 1. Funding for Aegis Ship Modernization
(millions of then-year dollars; totals may not add due to rounding)

	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09
<i>Aegis cruisers</i>					
RDT&EN	0	13.6	7.7	4.7	4.8
OPN	0	124.5	231.2	216.0	232.4
WPN	0	5.3	18.4	23.4	45.2
OMN	0	41.2	86.7	101.4	111.4
<i>Cruiser subtotal</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>184.6</i>	<i>344.0</i>	<i>345.5</i>	<i>393.8</i>
<i>Aegis destroyers</i>					
SCN	49.8	49.3	0	0	0
OPN	0	3.0	32.0	52.7	165.5
OMN	0	10.0	3.9	20.9	39.9
<i>Destroyer subtotal</i>	<i>49.8</i>	<i>62.3</i>	<i>35.9</i>	<i>73.6</i>	<i>205.4</i>
TOTAL	49.8	246.9	379.9	419.1	599.2

Source: Navy data provided to CRS on May 20, 2008.

Notes: **RDT&EN** is the Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Navy appropriation account; **SCN** is the Shipbuilding and Conversion, Navy account; **OPN** is the Other Procurement, Navy account; **WPN** is the Weapon Procurement, Navy account, and **OMN** is the Operation and Maintenance, Navy account. RDT&EN funds are for the ship program only, and do not include funds for Aegis Weapon System development.

Schedule. Under the Navy's plan, the oldest cruisers and destroyers would be modernized first, followed by progressively younger ships. The Navy wants to divide the modernization work for each ship into two shipyard periods — one for HM&E work, the other for combat system work. The first cruiser HM&E upgrade began in FY2006, and

³ Otto Kreisher, "BMD Boost," *Seapower*, August 2008: 12-14.

⁴ For more on sea-based BMD programs, see CRS Report RL33745, *Sea-Based Ballistic Missile Defense — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

the first cruiser combat system upgrade was to begin in FY2008 (specifically, February FY2008). Two fully modernized cruisers per year are to be delivered in FY2009 and FY2010, and three per year are to be delivered starting in FY2011. The Navy wants each destroyer to receive its combat system modernization two years after its HM&E modernization. The Navy wants to begin the first two destroyer HM&E modernizations in FY2010 and its first two destroyer combat system modernizations (on the same two ships) in FY2012. The Navy reportedly wants to increase the rate to three ships per year in FY2013-FY2015, and to nine ships per year starting in FY2016.⁵

Shipyards Performing The Work. The Navy plans to use competitively awarded MSMO contracts for executing the Aegis modernizations. Under the Navy's plan, all U.S. shipyards would be eligible to compete for the contracts. Navy policy calls for modernizations lasting longer than six months to be competed on a coast-wide basis, meaning that competitions would be open to all yards located along the same coast where the Aegis ships in question are homeported.

Potential Issues for Congress

Total Estimated Cost Of Modernization Program. One potential oversight issue for Congress concerns the total estimated cost of the Aegis ship modernization program: What is the Navy's total estimated cost, and how was this figure affected by the Navy's reported decision to expand the scope of the DDG-51 modernization program to include the installation of a BMD capability?

Overall Vision Behind Modernization Plan.⁶ Some industry sources question the Navy's logic behind the Aegis ship modernization program, arguing that the Navy lacks a sufficiently thought-through overall vision — a desired end-point — for the surface combatant force, and that in the absence of such a vision, the Navy is planning to spend money on Aegis ship modernizations in a scattershot manner, without knowing whether this will lead to the best-possible future surface fleet for the Navy. These sources argue that, before spending money on Aegis ship modernizations, the Navy should develop a more fully considered overall vision for the future of the surface fleet that looks at the surface force and the Navy as a whole as parts of a larger network of defense capabilities involving other U.S. military forces. One potential alternative to the Navy's plan would be to forego some or all of the Aegis ship modernizations, accelerate the planned procurement of new cruisers and destroyers, and replace the unmodernized Aegis ships with the accelerated replacement ships.⁷

⁵ Otto Kreisher, "BMD Boost," *Seapower*, August 2008: 12-14.

⁶ This issue, and the subsequent potential issues for Congress, are based in part on CRS interviews conducted in January 2007 with several major defense firms that have an interest in the Aegis ship modernization program.

⁷ The Navy plans to replace the 22 CG-47s with 19 CG(X) cruisers to be procured between FY2011 and FY2023, and the 62 DDG-51s with a comparable number of DDG(X) destroyers, the first of which would be procured in FY2023. The DDG(X) is not to be confused with DD(X), the prior name of the DDG-1000 destroyer (which is not intended as a replacement for either the CG-47s or the DDG-51s). For more on the CG(X) program, see CRS Report RL34179, *Navy CG(X) Cruiser Program: Background, Oversight Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Ronald (continued...)

Shipyards For DDG-51 Modernizations. Some industry sources propose allocating all the DDG-51 modernizations to GD/BIW and NGSB, with each firm receiving one-half of the ships. These sources argue that this would reduce the cost of the DDG-51 modernizations by permitting the two firms to achieve sustained learning-curve benefits in the program, and also support the shipbuilding industrial base by providing additional work to the two yards that have built all Navy cruisers and destroyers procured in recent years. Competitive pressure on GD/BIW and NGSB, these industry sources argue, can be maintained by using Profit Related to Offer (PRO) bidding, under which the two yards would bid prices for performing the modernizations allocated to them, with the lower bid winning a higher profit margin.

Sequence For DDG-51 Modernizations. Some industry sources argue that the Navy should begin the DDG-51 modernizations with DDG-51s currently under construction, followed by whatever DDG-51s are scheduled for depot-level maintenance. Others argue that the Navy should upgrade the combat systems on younger DDG-51s when they come into yards for periodic overhaul and repair work, while modernizing older DDG-51s at the same time.

Scope of DDG-51 Modernizations. Some industry sources have suggested expanding the scope of the DDG-51 modernizations in various ways to further increase the ships' capabilities or further reduce their crew sizes and operating costs. One proposal would add some electric-drive propulsion equipment to the ships' existing mechanical-drive propulsion systems to more fully interconnect the mechanical-drive components, which could reduce the ships' fuel use and create other operational advantages.⁸

Service Life Extension to 40 Years. Another potential option for the Aegis ship modernization program would be to expand its scope to include work that would be needed to extend the service lives of the Aegis ships from 35 years to a higher number, such as 40 years. Extending the Aegis ships' service lives to 40 years could permit the Navy to maintain higher numbers of cruisers and destroyers in future years. The Navy's report on its FY2009 30-year shipbuilding plan, submitted to Congress in early February 2008, incorporates a new assumption that the service lives of all 62 Aegis destroyers will be extended from 35 years to 40 years.⁹ Subsequent to the submission of this report, however, a Navy official was quoted as stating that the Navy had not yet officially approved the idea of extending the service lives of those ships.¹⁰

Aegis Open Architecture. Some observers have expressed concerns about the Navy's plan for moving to an open architecture (OA) on the Aegis system, arguing that

⁷ (...continued)
O'Rourke.

⁸ For more on this proposal, see CRS Report RL33360, *Navy Ship Propulsion Technologies: Options for Reducing Oil Use — Background for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

⁹ U.S Navy, *Report to Congress on Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for FY 2009*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Zachary M. Peterson, "Destroyer Extension Part of 313-Ship Plan," *NavyTimes.com*, February 11, 2008.

it will not shift the Aegis ships to a truly open architecture, or do so quickly enough.¹¹ For firms that make Navy surface ship combat systems, or parts of them, the issue of how to implement open architecture on Aegis ships and other Navy surface ships has potentially very large business implications. Potential candidates for the basis of an eventual common open-architecture combat system for Navy surface ships include (but are not necessarily limited to) a modularized version of Lockheed's Aegis system, Raytheon's Total Ship Computing Environment Infrastructure, or TSCEI (the core of the combat system being developed for the DDG-1000 destroyers), and the Core Mission System developed by General Dynamics and Northrop for the General Dynamics version of the LCS. On September 22, 2008, Raytheon filed a protest with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for lack of competition in the Navy's plan to award a sole-source contract to Lockheed for modernizing the Aegis combat systems on the fleet's cruisers and destroyers.¹²

Legislative Activity for FY2009

FY2009 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 5658/S. 3001). The *Senate Armed Services Committee* discussed the Aegis destroyer modernization program on pages 79-80 of its report (S. Rept., 110-335 of May 12, 2008) on S. 3001. The committee stated that it views the Navy's plan to extend DDG-51 service life to 40 years as "very high risk," questioned whether the Navy has fully evaluated the option of performing the DDG-51 modernizations in the yards where the ships were built, and directed the Navy to submit a report on this option and on the Navy's plan to perform the work through MSMO contracts. The report discussed the Navy's plan to move toward an Aegis open architecture on pages 121-123. The committee expressed concern regarding the Navy's rate of progress in achieving this goal, and directed that no more than 50% of FY2009 funding authorized for certain Navy research and development work on surface ship combat systems may be obligated "until 30 days after submission by the Secretary of the Navy of a detailed program plan for implementing OA for the Aegis combat system. The program plan shall be included in subsequent quarterly reports to the congressional defense committees on Naval Open Architecture, and shall include methodology and scheduling for incrementally opening the Aegis combat system."

FY2009 Defense Appropriations Act (H.R. 2638/P.L. 110-329). The FY2009 defense appropriations bill became Division C of H.R. 2638/P.L. 110-329 of September 30, 2008, a consolidated appropriations act. The bill approves the Navy's OPN funding request for Aegis destroyer modernization, reduces the Navy's OPN funding request for Aegis cruiser modernization by \$66.7 million, and reduces the Navy's WPN funding request for Aegis cruiser modernization by \$15.1 million.

¹¹ See, for example, Dan Taylor, "Roughhead: Navy Could Be Implementing Open Architecture Faster," *Inside the Navy*, September 29, 2008. See also Dan Taylor, "Report: All Cruisers, Destroyers To Have Open Architecture by 2025," *Inside the Navy*, September 8, 2005; and Geoff Fein, "Navy OA Report To Congress Shows Service Making Gains Across The Enterprise," *Defense Daily*, September 5, 2008.

¹² August Cole, "Raytheon Files Protest On Aegis Work," *Wall Street Journal*, September 24, 2008: B3; Geoff Fein, "As A Measure of Last Resort, Raytheon Files Protest Over Lack of Aegis Competition," *Defense Daily*, September 25, 2008: 2-3; Rebekah Gordon, "Raytheon Protests Sole-Source Award For Aegis Modernization," *Inside the Navy*, September 29, 2008.