Navy, Maryland Set Up New Energetics Innovation Hub to Speed Capability to the Warfighter

The symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for the new Maryland Energetics Innovation Hub. From left: Indian Head Mayor Brandon Paulin; Will Durant, President and CEO of Energetics Technology Center; David Dowell, CEO of ACMI Properties; U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer; Commander Robert Lusk, Executive Officer, NSA South Potomac; and Captain Stephen Duba, Commanding Officer, NSWC Indian Head Division. *Photo credit: ACMI Group*

INDIAN HEAD, Maryland – Replenishing the U.S. military's supply of weapons and speeding new systems to the field are hot topics these days, and on May 28 federal, state and local officials gathered near Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head to break ground on a new public-private partnership to do all that and more.

The American Center for Manufacturing & Innovation (ACMI), an

industrial development group, co-hosted the groundbreaking with NSWC Indian Head for the Maryland Energetics Innovation Hub (MEIH), a defense manufacturing and innovation hub designed to modernize the developing and testing of energetics, the technologies and components that make up propulsion systems, warheads, flares, bombs and other explosive devices.

MEIH is intended to speed production of current weapons as well as the design of new ones and will consist of multiple new buildings just outside the gates of NSWC Indian Head. It will host companies and research institutions focused on eight priority areas, including energetics for uncrewed systems, next-generation propulsion systems, manufacturing automation and other capabilities.

“The United States is at a critical juncture right now, from the rapid expenditure of munitions in the Middle East to our ongoing commitments globally,” Captain Stephen Duba, commanding officer of NSWC Indian Head Division, said at the groundbreaking event. “The demand signal from our warfighter has never been louder than it is right now … to outpace our adversaries in the research development and production of cutting-edge energetic systems, we must scale and we must go faster for our nation.”

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland), a member of the money-dispensing House Appropriations Committee, said MEIH is the result of “a team effort. It’s a team effort in the private sector, it’s a team effort at the federal, state and local levels as well,” one that includes some $16 million in appropriations funding from defense bills last year and one pending for fiscal 2027.

Captain Stephen Duba, Commanding Officer, NSWC Indian Head Division, speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony. *Photo credit: Brett Davis*

Speed to the Field

Setting up facilities such as MEIH rapidly is one of the goals of ACMI, which in February announced a National Security Industrial Hub in Indiana adjacent to Naval Surface Warfare Center – Crane Division and Crane Army Ammunition Activity.

MEIH is backed by an initial $50 million award from NSWC Indian Head and is expected to raise more than $200 million in additional private investment. As in the Indiana location, putting the facilities outside a military base, but not on it, is intended to make the development faster.

“We are doing all this in record time,” David Dowell, CEO of ACMI Properties, said of MEIH, as the contract from NSWC Indian Head was awarded just last month. The goal is to have the facility up and running in 18 to 24 months.

At the event, Dowell said the United States has often

developed technologies that went elsewhere for production or were never produced at all.

“That gap, between innovation and production of innovative products, has become one of the greatest risks of both our economic edge and our common security. This project, the Maryland Energetics Innovation Hub, was conceived specifically to bridge this gap in the energetics space.”

And although the focus of the effort is energetics, that covers a lot of ground, said Will Durant, president and CEO of Energetics Technology Center, one of the two newly announced inaugural tenants of MEIH, along with Applied Research Associates.

“The goal of MEIH is there are eight stated capability areas and they are not only energetics, they are energetics adjacent,” Durant said.

That includes advanced energetics, uncrewed systems, autonomous systems, high-performance computing, even robotic arms for the safe handling of energetics, Durant said.

“We want to do the energetics innovation, and then anything that helps get greater capability to the warfighter faster is what we’re doing at MEIH.”