

Navy Narrows Fiscal 2025 Aircraft Procurement to Five Types



PHILIPPINE SEA (Jan. 29, 2024) An F-35C Lightning II from the “Warhawks” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 97 prepares to recover on the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Isaiah B. Goessl)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Department of the Navy is proposing to procure 75 aircraft with \$16.2 billion in the fiscal 2025 budget, but those 75 are divided among only five types.

The 2025 budget proposed funding 13 F-35B Lightning II strike fighters for the Marine Corps; 13 F-35C carrier-based variants for the Navy and Marine Corps; 19 CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters for the Marine Corps, 27 T-54 multi-engine training aircraft for the Navy, and three MQ-25A Stingray unmanned aerial refueling aircraft for the Navy.

The budget is noteworthy in that the 2025 procurement funding of such types as the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters, EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye radar warning aircraft, MH-60R/S helicopters, MV-22B and CMV-22B Osprey transport aircraft, AH-1Z Viper and UH-1Y Venom helicopters, P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, MQ-4C Triton and MQ-9A Reaper unmanned surveillance aircraft, and TH-73A Thrasher training helicopters – barring adjustment by the Congress – has been completed, although in some cases deliveries are ongoing. In some cases, the production lines will remain open for some time, building aircraft for foreign customers and which could resume production for the Navy and Marine Corps if needed.

The only new types on the five-year horizon are a replacement for the T-45 Goshawk training jet and a replacement for the E-6B Mercury strategic communications aircraft, planned to be a version of the C-130J Super Hercules.

Procurement of the KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport for the Marine Corps is being gapped for four years, with one planned for fiscal 2029. The fact that C-130Js are in production for other services and nations means that this gap does not have major implications for the Lockheed Martin production line.

The 2025 Future Years Defense Plan lists planned Department of the Navy procurement for 2026 through 2029 as 58, 67, 77, and 90 aircraft, respectively.

Noteworthy is – as of this writing – that the fiscal 2024 defense budget still is mired in the Congress.