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## **Marine Corps awards automatic rifle contracts**

QUANTICO, Va. — Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) announces the award of four contracts to three companies for the Marine Corps Infantry Automatic Rifle (IAR). The three companies are FN Herstal of Herstal, Belgium; Heckler and Koch Defense of Ashburn, Va.; and Colt Defense of West Hartford, Conn. Colt received two different contracts because they have two acceptable candidate systems that are technically different enough to warrant further evaluation.

The awards are five-year indefinite-delivery indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contracts with possible delivery orders up to \$27 million per contract for the production, delivery and associated support of the IAR. Under the IDIQ contracts, each awardee will produce and deliver a minimum of 10 weapons. The Marine Corps will next evaluate these weapons and then intends to select one weapon system from one company to meet the IAR requirement. The current Authorized Acquisition Objective is 4,476, but each awardee may have the opportunity to be selected to produce and deliver a maximum of 6,500 weapons on follow-on delivery orders.

The IAR is a light-weight, magazine-fed, 5.56mm weapon. It will provide a one-for-one replacement for the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) in the Marine Rifle Squad within infantry battalions and in the scout teams in Light Armored Reconnaissance battalions. The IAR seeks to enhance the Automatic Rifleman's maneuverability and displacement speed while providing the warfighter the ability to suppress or destroy those targets of most immediate concern to the fire team.

The government is using an acquisition strategy that narrows the field to the most highly rated candidates. Ten total proposals were received and underwent verification testing. Four candidates were chosen for their capability to meet the stated requirements. Once the Marine Corps receives the 10 weapons from each of the awardees, which is expected to be by mid-March 2009, it will proceed to further verification and operational testing to decide on the best-value solution.

The weapons will undergo a Limited User Evaluation to solicit feedback from Infantry Marines. MCSC has had and will continue to have input from Marine Corps operating forces throughout the process. The candidate systems will also undergo more extensive endurance and reliability testing at government facilities.

The Initial Operating Capability is scheduled for December 2010.