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Naval analysts caution service on approach for future frigate program

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Presentation slides from the FFG(X) industry day show the Navy is prioritizing capability, affordability and schedule, in that order. However, Bryan Clark, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, believes the approach the service established for the RFI points to cost being the main consideration.

For example, the RFI categorizes Tier capabilities as minimum attributes for the ship. Vendors are asked to identify cost impacts of adding Tier 2 requirements and self-defense launchers, Clark wrote in a July 31 statement to *Inside the Navy*.

"This implies the upgraded [Littoral Combat Ship], which will cost \$350-450M (without mission package) is the minimum and 'good enough'," he wrote. "When the Navy asks vendors to describe the tradespace of adding Tier 2 capabilities and self-defense launchers, it will be in terms of cost compared to the LCS. This clearly indicates they are prioritizing cost over capability."

Clark notes that if the service was looking to prioritize capability over affordability on the FFG(X) program a higher set of minimum requirements would be outlined for the planned upgraded LCS.

"For example, the Navy could have said the minimum requirements are Tier 1 plus Tier 2 capabilities, which would be essentially what it wanted to achieve with the FFG," according to Clark. "The Navy could then ask vendors to provide rough costs for that ship and the cost impacts of improving the attributes above threshold and adding a self-defense missile launch like [the Vertical Launch System]."

Another tactic the Navy could have implemented on prioritizing capability over cost is to identify a price point for the FFG(X). Vendors could then provide estimates for Tier 2 capabilities, self-defense launchers, and attributes above threshold within the cost cap, Clark wrote.