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The U.S. Army's Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) System

Background

Protecting high-value military sites against enemy cruise missile (CM), uncrewed aerial system (UAS), and rocket, artillery, and mortar (RAM) attacks has long been an important consideration in protecting military forces. According to the U.S. Army, the Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) System is a mobile, ground-based weapon system designed to defeat cruise missiles, uncrewed aircraft systems, and rocket, artillery, and mortars. IFPC is intended to protect critical fixed- or semi-fixed assets and bridge the gap between short-range air defense (SHORAD) systems, the Patriot air and missile defense system, and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.

Origins of the IFPC Program

The Army initiated the IFPC program, known as IFPC Increment 1, in 2004. Concerned with the pace and direction of the Army's counter RAM (C-RAM) development, some in Congress expressed an interest in acquiring Israel's Iron Dome C-RAM system as an interim solution. In both the FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (P.L. 115-232) and the FY2019 Department of Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-245), Congress directed the Army to deploy four batteries—two in 2020 and two in 2023—of a medium-range air defense system to counter cruise missiles and other threats. Because of difficulties integrating the first two Iron Dome batteries into existing and planned Army air and missile defense command and control architecture, the FY2021 NDAA (P.L. 116-283) waived the requirement for the final two Iron Dome batteries. The decision not to adopt Iron Dome reportedly served as the basis for the Army initiating the IFPC Increment 2 program.

IFPC Increment 2

On September 24, 2021, the Army announced “the award of a three-year prototype Other Transaction Authority Agreement (OTA) to Dynetics (a subsidiary of Leidos) for the development and delivery of 16 launcher prototypes, 60 interceptors, and associated all-up-round magazines for the Indirect Fire Protection Capability Increment 2” (Figure 1), with the first IFPC Increment 2 battalion to be fielded by FY2026.

IFPC Increment 2 Fielding Plans

According to the Army, the nine planned IFPC Increment 2 battalions have been or are to be fielded as follows:

- 1-51st Air Defense Artillery (ADA)—Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA—FY2026;
- 1-57th ADA—Fort Drum, NY—FY2028;

- 3rd IFPC Battalion (BN)—3rd Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF), Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA—FY2029;
- 5-5th ADA—Fort Carson, CO—FY2029;
- 2-44th ADA—5th MDTF—Fort Bragg, NC—FY2030;
- 6th IFPC BN—I Corps—Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA—FY2030;
- 7th IFPC BN—5th Corps—Fort Campbell, KY—FY2031;
- 8th IFPC BN—location to be determined—FY2031; and
- 9th IFPC BN—3rd Corps—Fort Hood, TX—FY2033.

2023 IFPC Program Delay and Guam IFPC Fielding

Reportedly in 2023, the IFPC Increment 2 program was facing a delay of at least eight months and possibly a year, attributed to “aggressive activity to support fielding in Guam by 2027.” Based on revised plans, Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E), originally planned for FY2025, was to begin in FY2026.

According to February 2026 discussions between CRS and the Army, current Guam IFPC-related plans remain on track, with first shipments of the system planned to begin in the first quarter of FY2027. The Army also plans to have all 20 IFPC launchers on the ground in Guam by the third quarter of FY2027 to prepare for Initial Operational Capability (IOC). According to the Army, the Guam IFPC program is scoped strictly for Army facilities and Army sites.

Figure 1. IFPC Increment 2 Prototype



Source: IFPC Increment 2 Prototype: https://asc.army.mil/web/portfolio-item/ms-ifpc_inc_2-il.

Other IFPC Variants

The Army is presently developing three IFPC variants, the Increment 2 Interceptor variant, the High Energy Laser

(HEL) variant (**Figure 2**), and the High-Power Microwave (HPM) variant (**Figure 3**). Each variant is in a different stage of development, and variants were originally intended to operate in a complementary manner.

IFPC Increment 2 Interceptor Variant

The interceptor variant is to utilize an open architecture design to enable future missile integration. Reportedly, Increment 2 can employ the AIM-9X Sidewinder missile and the AGM-114L Longbow variant of the Hellfire missile. The Army is also testing the Israeli Tamir missile used by Israel's Iron Dome system. In October 2025, the Army awarded Lockheed Martin an OTA agreement to prototype a second interceptor for IFPC Increment 2, intended to improve performance against cruise missile threats and expand engagement options beyond existing interceptor configurations.

A New Increment 2 Interceptor Variant

Reportedly, the Army is considering developing a second interceptor for IFPC Increment 2, with one official noting, "It is now clearer that the service needs a second interceptor that is more capable against lower flying, supersonic cruise missiles." The Army reportedly envisions "an AIM-120D-like capability, but with smaller rounds that fit inside an IFPC Increment 2 launcher holding 18 interceptors." If the Army pursues a second interceptor, development is planned to continue through 2029 to 2030 before low-rate initial production.

Figure 2. Notional IFPC High Energy Laser (HEL)



Source: Notional IFPC High Energy Laser (HEL): https://www.army.mil/article/233346/scaling_up_army_advances_300kw_class_laser_prototype.

IFPC High Energy Laser (HEL)

According to CRS discussions with the Army, Lockheed Martin is currently developing the IFPC HEL and received a July 2023 OTA contract for two prototypes, which has since been reduced to one prototype. Prototype delivery is currently expected in the September-October 2026 timeframe. The prototype is currently at a Lockheed Martin facility in Morristown, NJ, undergoing final lab testing. If lab testing proves successful, the Army plans to ship the prototype to Dugway Proving Grounds, UT, sometime in March 2026 for summer developmental testing. The Army

said that the prototype will not transition to an operational fielding to Army units but instead be divested as a fielding candidate and used to inform the Joint Laser Warfighting System.

IFPC High Power Microwave (HPM)

Figure 3. IFPC High Power Microwave (HPM)



Source: <https://breakingdefense.com/2023/01/us-army-selects-epirus-leonidas-for-high-power-microwave-initiative/>.

According to the Army, the IFPC HPM is intended to provide short-range protection for fixed and semi-fixed sites against small UAS (weighing about 55 pounds or less) swarm attacks. In January 2023, the Army reportedly awarded a \$66.1 million contract to Epirus to deliver four high-powered microwave prototypes to the Army in FY2024 for testing. The Army reports that the initial four prototypes have been delivered and that the Army purchased two additional prototypes, with delivery expected by the end of March 2026. After the delivery of those two additional prototypes, no further procurement is planned at this time.

Potential Considerations for Congress

Oversight questions Congress could consider include the following:

- To what extent would IFPC units be expected to protect the other services' fixed or semi-fixed sites, such as Air Force air bases, Navy port facilities, or Marine Corps sites? According to the Army, Guam-based IFPC units are intended to protect only Army assets. Are the Navy, Marines, and Air Force also developing a similar capability, and how might IFPC fit into any developmental efforts?
- What are the Army's specific plans regarding IFPC HEL and IFPC HPM variants? Originally intended to complement IFPC Increment 2, it now appears that both systems will not be fielded to Army units, but instead be divested and not developed beyond prototypes. What is the Army's rationale for this decision, and what joint programs will these prototypes be used for?

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