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

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Background

The protection of 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 CMs, UASs, and RAMs. 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 CMs 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's initiation of 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 [OTA] agreement to Dynetics [a subsidiary of Leidos] for the development and delivery of 16 field-able 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 planned to be fielded by FY2026.

IFPC Increment 2 Fielding Plans

According to Army discussions with CRS, nine planned IFPC Increment 2 battalions have been or are planned to be fielded:

- 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." According to 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 intended strictly to protect Army facilities and Army sites.

Figure 1. IFPC Increment 2 Prototype



Source: Darrell Ames, "US Army Awards Indirect Fire Protection Capability Inc 2 Contract Worth Up to $4.1 Billion," U.S. Army, November 27, 2024, https://www.army.mil/article/281667/us_army_awards_indirect_fire_protection_capability_inc_2_contract_worth_up_to_4_1_billion.

The Army was originally developing three IFPC variants, the Increment 2 Interceptor variant, the High Energy Laser (HEL) variant, and the High-Power Microwave (HPM) variant. The three IFPC 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 CM threats and expand engagement options beyond existing interceptor configurations.

A New Increment 2 Interceptor Variant

Reportedly, the Army is considering development of 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 Inc 2 launcher holding 18 interceptors." If the Army pursues a second interceptor, development is planned to continue through 2029-2030 before low-rate initial production.

Army Reopens IFPC 2 Interceptor Competition

In October 2026, the Army reportedly decided to reopen competition for an IFPC 2 interceptor and invite companies previously eliminated from the competition to recompete to possibly accelerate interceptor development. This was characterized as an "initiative as part of a broader effort to eliminate lengthy acquisition schedules that delay delivery of capabilities needed to counter rapidly evolving threats."

IFPC Increment 2 Production Contract

According to the Department of Defense (DOD)—which is currently "using a secondary Department of War designation" under Executive Order 14347 of September 5, 2025—Dynetics of Huntsville, AL, was awarded a $617 million contract for the FY2026 production buy of IFPC Increment 2 systems, including launcher systems, retrofitted prototype launchers, all-up-round magazines, and additional services. Work on this contract is expected to be completed by November 30, 2029.

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 was expected in the September-October 2026 time frame. The prototype is currently at a Lockheed Martin facility in Morristown, NJ, undergoing final lab testing. The Army had planned to ship the prototype to Dugway Proving Grounds, UT, sometime in March 2026 for summer developmental testing. The Army said that the prototype would not transition to an operational fielding to Army units but instead would be divested as a fielding candidate and used to inform development of the Joint Laser Warfighting System.

Army Divests IFPC HEL

Reportedly, in September 2026, the Army decided to divest its IFPC HEL variant "to leverage Navy-led development of larger-aperture laser weapons." This divestment is reportedly not seen as abandoning an IFPC HEL capability permanently, with the Army reportedly noting that it "sees directed energy as a combat multiplier across multiple domains, with the potential to reduce the burden on kinetic inventory at echelon."

IFPC High Power Microwave (HPM)

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. According to Army discussions with CRS, the initial four prototypes have been delivered, and the Army purchased two additional prototypes for which delivery was expected by the end of March 2026. After the delivery of those two additional prototypes, no further procurement is planned currently.

IFPC Increment 2 FY2027 Budget Request

According to DOD's FY2027 budget request, the Army is requesting $1.6 billion in discretionary funding for IFPC Increment 2, about double the Army's $831 million FY2026 request, which was intended for the acquisition of 62 IFPC Increment 2 launchers, 148 AIM-9X missiles, and 24 IFPC magazines.

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 is there a possibility that the Army would reconsider future IFPC HEL and HPM variants?

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