

AVIATION WEEK PROGRAM EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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Gregory Hamilton
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Acknowledged, agreed, and submitted by

Tasmia Niazi
Nominee's Signature

June 26, 2025
Date

Nominee's Name (please print): Tasmia Niazi

Title (please print): Value Stream Leader / Program Manager

Company (please print): Collins Aerospace

NOMINATION FORM

Name of Program: Special Program Advanced Readiness Trainer Afloat / Ashore (SPARTA)

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☐ Supplier Approved (if named in this nomination form)

o Date:

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**PLEASE REFER TO PROGRAM EXCELLENCE DIRECTIONS
AS YOU COMPLETE THIS FORM.**

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

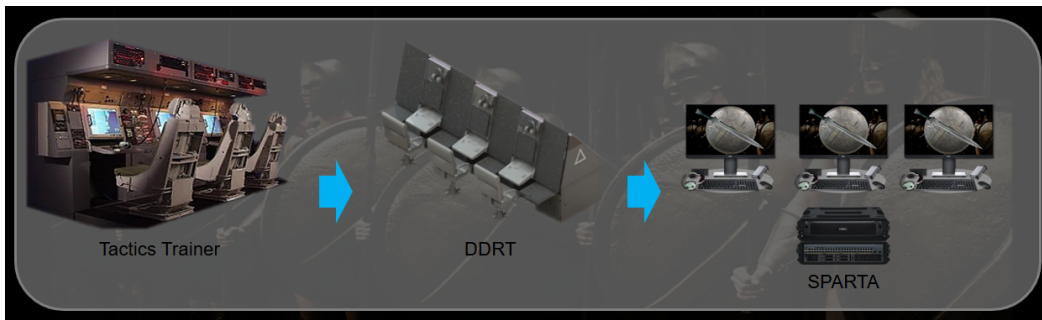
Make the Case for Excellence

What is the vision for this program/project? What unique characteristics and properties qualify this program for consideration?

The E-2D Advanced Hawkeye is the U.S. Navy's premier carrier airborne early warning command and control aircraft, providing the Carrier Strike Group Commander's critical situational awareness and battle management capabilities. The E-2D is often the first to see a threat and plays a key role in directing the response, making it one of the most strategic assets in any carrier strike group. The E-2D is often described as the "quarterback of the skies," and has been a cornerstone of carrier strike group operations since its first fleet delivery in July 2010. Outfitted with sophisticated radar systems and high-powered computing, the E-2D plays a pivotal role in early threat detection and is one of the Navy's most vital enablers of operational awareness, effectively alerting other Naval, Joint, and combined forces to impending threats, assisting in identifying and distinguishing between allied and adversary forces.

Given the complexity of the E-2D's technology and its advanced mission roles, it is essential that aircrews receive comprehensive training to combat high-end threats and maintain a constant state of readiness, prepared to "fight tonight." Collins Aerospace was awarded the first E-2D Hawkeye Integrated Training System (HITS) contract in 2008 and has since remained a trusted partner to the E-2 Community and Naval Air Warfare Center – Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD), consistently delivering innovative and advanced training solutions. Collins Aerospace has successfully delivered four Weapon System Trainers (WSTs) to key E-2D fleet locations at Naval Air Station Ventura County (Point Mugu, California) and Naval Station Norfolk (Norfolk, Virginia), with two additional WSTs scheduled for delivery by the end of 2026. Additionally, Collins has fielded and delivered seven E-2D Distributed Readiness Trainers (D-DRT), providing a full-fidelity simulation environment utilizing the latest E-2D Operational Flight Program (OFP) software while eliminating all Aircraft Common Equipment (ACE) components. This innovative approach significantly reduces the physical footprint of the trainer and has been successfully implemented across NAS Ventura County, Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Air Station Oceana (Virginia Beach, Virginia), and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) (Iwakuni, Japan).

Efficiency and Readiness. To maintain a high level of mission readiness and proficiency, E-2D aircrews require consistent, high-quality training for mission success. Without continuous training, E-2D aircrews are unable to sustain their operational effectiveness, risking mission failure if these skills are not exercised. The capabilities of the E-2D aircraft system, alongside its evolving Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs), have highlighted the growing need for deployable training solutions onboard U.S. aircraft carriers and other strategic sites for aircrews. To address this challenge and meet the immediate training requirements, Collins Aerospace, in collaboration with the E-2D training team and Common Modeling and Simulation Ecosystem (CMSE) team, developed a next-generation solution: Special Program Advanced Readiness Trainer Afloat / Ashore (SPARTA). In just over seven months, the Collins team successfully transformed the E-2D training architecture into a fully virtual, deployable solution, consolidating 22 ACE systems and commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) hardware into two compact servers. What previously required several racks of equipment and over 15 individual computers now fit into a portable device suitable for deployment, whether afloat or ashore.



Maturity of the E-2D Tactical Training System – Full Fidelity to Deployable Solution

The SPARTA system has been designed for versatile use, functioning both as a standalone solution and as part of an integrated training environment suite with F-35 and F/A-18 systems. The SPARTA prototype was demonstrated in June 2023 to key stakeholders, including leaders of the E-2D community, PMA-231, O-5/O-6 from Fleet Forces and N98. The demonstration received an overwhelmingly positive response, prompting strong interest from the Government in deploying the SPARTA device aboard U.S. aircraft carriers by April 2024 under a program led by PMA-205 called Sims at Sea (S@S).

The USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN is the initial carrier application as, where they are actively supporting an integrated naval training solution. To support the successful implementation of the SPARTA systems and the S@S program, a systems engineer from Collins volunteered to be aboard the USS LINCOLN on a one-month assignment. During this period, the engineer worked closely with VAW-117, gaining critical insights into the SPARTA systems' operational performance in a live deployment environment. Building on the success aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the Government authorized the deployment of an additional stand-alone SPARTA system aboard the USS CARL VINSON as well as another SPARTA integrated with S@S on the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON. Government requirements have been instrumental in the program's success. Currently, Collins is under contract to procure, develop, and deploy eleven SPARTA systems across various designated sites and naval carriers.

SECTION 2: VALUE CREATION

- Clearly define the value of this program/project for the corporation; quantify appropriately

Building Trust. The E-2D SPARTA program presented a significant opportunity for Collins Aerospace to further establish and solidify trust with our customers. This trust is of utmost importance, not only to our immediate customers, **Naval Air Warfare Center – Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD)** and Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), and to the broader fleet end-user community and our dedicated team members at Collins. By consistently meeting and exceeding delivery schedules while providing critical capabilities to the fleet in diverse environments, we continue to reinforce that trust at every stage. The collaboration between NAWCTSD, NAWCAD and the Collins team, especially during challenging circumstances, played a crucial role in fostering a strong, trust-based partnership. This shared dedication made the work both rewarding and impactful for everyone involved. In this instance, the urgency was clear: the need to deliver critical training capability to the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN as quickly as possible. And together, we made this a reality.



USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN – CVN-72 departure

Fulfilling Work. Our team's unwavering commitment to building and maintaining confidence, even during some of the most demanding circumstances, fostered a positive attitude that strengthened the entire team's dedication to excellence and made the work truly *fulfilling*. While financial security is important, people need more than just a paycheck to feel engaged and motivated. We were united in our shared goal: to deliver this critical capability to the warfighter. Even when challenges arose, the team rallied together, overcoming obstacles and delivering exceptional results. These are the kinds of experiences that lead to true work fulfillment, where employees value every aspect of their role and not just the financial reward.

- Clearly define the value of this program/project to your customer

One Team & Dedication. From the program's inception, the SPARTA team was driven to exceed expectations. The E-2 community had identified a critical need: to conduct frequent, advanced mission training to maintain highly refined skillsets required for operational success. This need was especially urgent given the upcoming fleet deployment aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, where deploying a capable training solution was essential. In close partnership with NAWCTSD, the team successfully transformed a conceptual vision into a rapid prototype demonstration and, ultimately, into a contract award for production within seven months. Achieving delivery of the first SPARTA system to a U.S. carrier in

less than a year was a bold and unprecedented accomplishment, clearly demonstrating the team's unmatched speed, focus, and relentless commitment to mission readiness.

“We delivered something from an idea to actuality in about a year, which is really a testament to the team coming together and tearing apart the way that we typically do things to deliver something that is making a difference today.”

-Capt. Kevin T. McGee Program Manager PMA-205

➤ **Clearly define the value of this program/project to members of your team; quantify if possible**

Ownership & Pride. The Collins team supporting the SPARTA program was smaller than those involved in other programs within the E-2D portfolio; the Program Manager, Project Engineer, Hardware Lead, and Systems Lead were all new to their respective positions. Despite this, the team demonstrated remarkable growth and adaptability, ultimately taking full ownership of the SPARTA program, from conceptual design to final delivery. Motivated by a strong sense of ownership and pride, a systems engineer from the SPARTA team volunteered to remain aboard the ship for over a month. This selfless commitment to the program ensured continuous support and provided invaluable, first-hand insight into how the fleet would utilize the SPARTA system. The engineer's proactive decision not only reinforced government confidence in the system but also enabled Collins to gain a deeper understanding of SPARTA's operational use case, ultimately enhancing its long-term value and effectiveness for the warfighter.

➤ **Clearly define the contribution of this program/project to the greater good (society, security, etc.)**

Ready to Fight. As U.S. foreign policy shifts focus and our Armed Forces prepare for the possibility of a near-peer conflict, the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye stands at the forefront of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) operations. With its unmatched situational awareness and command-and-control capabilities, the E-2D pushes the boundaries of what's possible, but it also pushes the limits of how aircrews train. Traditional military ranges can no longer keep pace. Simulating realistic combat scenarios now demands far more than live aircraft and open airspace; it requires innovation and adaptability. It requires protection from prying eyes, with adversary intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems constantly seeking to exploit even routine training. To address these evolving demands, E-2D aircrews require fully functional, concurrent, and distributed training systems that support comprehensive readiness across all mission types. More than just a simulator, SPARTA is a dynamic, mobile training solution that is purpose-built for the modern fight. It enables E-2D aircrews to train when and where they need to, staying sharp, connected, and mission-ready at all times. Delivering this capability to the fleet meant giving our warfighters the edge they need when it matters most. And with that came a sense of pride that went far beyond the workbench: it was about being part of the fight before the fight begins.



Flight Deck of CVN-72: F/A-18E & E-2D Hawkeye

SECTION 3: ORGANIZATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND TEAM LEADERSHIP

- Describe the innovative tools and systems used by your team, how they contributed to performance and why

Given the complexity of the SPARTA program, the team adopted a broad range of advanced tools, systems, and methodologies to effectively meet all requirements. Virtualization played an integral role in enabling the creation of an efficient, scalable, and reproducible environment. Within this framework, virtualization facilitated the seamless integration and automation of core technologies, including the Atlassian Suite (Jira, Confluence), GitLab, Ansible, Infrastructure as Code (IaC), and Configuration as Code (CaC). This integrated toolchain was instrumental in managing the full software development lifecycle, from infrastructure provisioning and configuration management to continuous integration and delivery (CI/CD) operations.

Atlassian Suite. To enhance the program's visibility, execution efficiency, and cross-team coordination, the SPARTA program team adopted the Atlassian Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) Suite, including JIRA and Confluence, as core tools. Despite initial resistance, the platform was successfully integrated into program workflows and became essential to managing development phases through the use of story points and Agile methodologies. ALM was crucial in centralizing the management of Risks and Opportunities (R&O), including the development, tracking, and reporting of mitigation and enhancement plans. By establishing standardized data export processes, the team produced consistent and actionable presentations that communicated key R&O metrics across multiple stakeholders and program areas. This enabled faster decision-making and improved coordination between engineering, program management, and leadership. This also enabled the engineering team to use JIRA to manage all Discrepancy Reports (DRs), supporting structured reviews, timely updates, and strict configuration control. The system provided detailed reporting on the number, status, and categorization of DRs, as well as engineer assignments. The outcome of these

reports enabled leadership to monitor issues, track resolution progress, and allocate resources to high-impact areas efficiently.

GitLab. The SPARTA program successfully integrated GitLab to enhance development workflows, source code management, and collaboration. This integration allowed for more efficient development cycles and improved code quality across multiple teams. The platform's built-in Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment (CI/CD) capabilities significantly reduced manual intervention, ensuring faster and more reliable software delivery. By automating key stages of the development pipeline, GitLab increased overall productivity and minimized the risk of errors, allowing the team to focus on high-value tasks. The platform also provided visibility into code quality metrics and potential vulnerabilities, allowing leadership to make data-driven decisions regarding resource allocation and risk management. This was crucial in maintaining the program's momentum and ensuring consistent delivery timelines.

Ansible. By adopting Infrastructure as Code (IaC) and Configuration as Code (CaC) methodologies, the SPARTA program leveraged Ansible to automate and enhance infrastructure provisioning, configuration management, and deployment operations. Ansible's declarative framework allowed the team to define infrastructure components and configurations in a clear, consistent, and repeatable manner. This approach not only enhanced operational efficiency but also significantly reduced the time required to deploy new environments and updates, accelerating the overall delivery cycle. This automation approach significantly increased system reliability and mitigated the potential for human error. The use of Ansible fostered effective collaboration among development, operations, and security teams, ensuring uniformity in configurations and updates across the SPARTA program. The platform's inherent transparency and control mechanisms facilitated continuous monitoring and validation of infrastructure states, ensuring that the environment remained stable and predictable despite ongoing changes and scaling efforts. The repeatability of Ansible playbooks allowed the SPARTA program to scale rapidly without compromising stability, supporting the dynamic needs of the program throughout its lifecycle. The integration of Ansible, driven by IaC and CaC principles, was instrumental in achieving a high degree of automation, reliability, and collaboration, enabling the SPARTA program to meet its infrastructure management and deployment objectives efficiently and effectively.

➤ Define the **unique** practices and process you used to develop, lead and manage people?



Collins Management System (CMS) & Pre-Execution Program Planning (PEPP). The Collins Management System (CMS) is an internal management framework designed to enhance customer satisfaction, capture rates, and overall performance execution. Rooted in the principles of accountability and empowerment, it provides a structured, consistent decision-making process. Rather than being a one-time initiative, the CMS is a comprehensive lifecycle framework that guides program leaders toward successful outcomes. The SPARTA team greatly benefited from this system, as it offered a proven, standardized approach for program success. The team actively engaged with the CMS framework, collaborating with subject matter experts (SMEs) and leveraging valuable insights to inform execution at every stage. The CMS is structured around organizational process assets designed to consistently deliver high-quality products and services, including the Pre-Execution Program Planning (PEPP) component. PEPP is a critical tool for the Program Leadership Team (PLT), helping them prepare for program execution. The SPARTA program took full advantage of the PEPP process. Given the relative inexperience of the PLT at the time, the guidance provided during the program's early stages was invaluable. The thorough planning and preparation

accomplished through the PEPP process contributed significantly to the program's success, benefiting the team throughout the entire program lifecycle.



Collaborative Meetings. Collaborative meeting sessions are critical components of effective program execution, enabling alignment, transparency, and informed decision-making across teams and functions. These sessions foster open communication, encourage cross-functional engagement, and ensure all stakeholders remain focused on shared goals and priorities. Through structured and purpose-driven meetings, ranging from planning workshops and technical reviews to daily stand-ups and executive briefings, the SPARTA team was able to face challenges early, coordinate actions, and maintain accountability. These touchpoints also promote knowledge sharing, accelerate problem resolution, and help maintain momentum throughout each phase of the

program. Consistent collaboration through meetings created a unified understanding of objectives, timelines, and responsibilities, reducing ambiguity and minimizing risk.

➤ **How did you leverage skills and technologies of your suppliers?**

Leverage Expertise. As part of the SPARTA program, our team partnered closely with the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) of the E-2D aircraft to deliver a cost-effective, high-fidelity training solution. Early in the program, the team recognized that duplicating or redeveloping the E-2D Operational Flight Program (OFP) would result in significant non-recurring engineering costs with limited benefit. Instead, the team focused on leveraging the OEM's existing expertise to maximize efficiency and reduce risk. Instead, the team made a strategic decision to leverage the expertise of the OEM by placing them under subcontract for the SPARTA program. Their responsibility was to integrate the existing aircraft OFP into a virtual Mission Computer Display (vMCD) configuration, which would be deployed across all SPARTA training devices. This solution enabled the delivery of high-fidelity simulators utilizing the same software used on the actual aircraft, ensuring training realism, accuracy, and operational relevance. This approach also enabled software concurrency between the live aircraft and the training environment. This alignment kept the training devices synchronized with current operational baselines, significantly enhancing training effectiveness and supporting faster adaptation to software updates and capability changes, enhancing both training value and program responsiveness.

SECTION 4: DEALING WITH PROGRAM COMPLEXITY (VOLATILITY, UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY, AMBIGUITY, or VUCA)

➤ **Describe UNIQUE areas of VUCA faced by your program and why.**

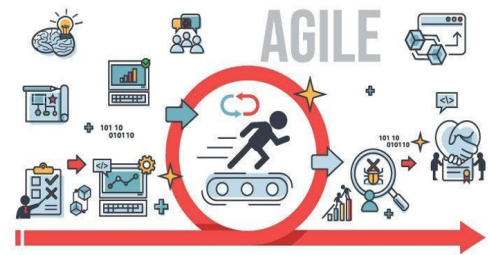
A primary objective of the SPARTA program was to rapidly deliver a deployable type trainer to the government before USS LINCOLN's departure. The timeline for this project was exceptionally tight, and this requirement introduced considerable technical complexities, as it involved re-architecting the existing E-2D training system, an effort that had not previously been attempted at such a reduced hardware footprint. Unlike traditional systems that required large, high-performance servers and extensive physical infrastructure, the goal was to deliver the same comprehensive training experience in a far smaller, more portable package.

The development team was responsible for virtualizing the aircraft's Operational Flight Program (OFP), which is the core software that controls the aircraft's systems and provides realistic training scenarios, as

well as integrating over 300 identified capabilities onto a compact server architecture. Despite the significant reduction in hardware, the system had to maintain the full fidelity and user experience expected of a traditional, full-scale E-2D trainer, ensuring that the fleet operators would have access to the same level of training quality. This effort is similar to how the gaming industry has evolved. Games that used to require powerful consoles or PCs are now optimized to run smoothly on mobile devices, offering the same experience with far less hardware. In a similar way, the SPARTA program aimed to retain the full experience of the E-2D trainer while drastically reducing the hardware footprint. The result is a system that delivers the same robust training capabilities, but on a much smaller, more flexible platform that can be easily deployed, even in dynamic operational environments.

➤ **Explain how your team responded to these challenges. What changes did you make, what were the results?**

The SPARTA team set out to address the timeline and capability requirements by utilizing the Agile software development process. Agile development offers a flexible, iterative approach to software development that emphasizes collaboration, customer feedback, and rapid delivery of functional software, instead of following a fixed plan. As a result, the SPARTA team was able to respond more effectively to changing customer requirements, reduce development cycle time, and deliver incremental value faster. These changes not only improved team productivity but also enhanced customer satisfaction by ensuring alignment with evolving expectations throughout the development process.



Flexibility and adaptability. The SPARTA team effectively leveraged Agile development principles to navigate a fast-paced and high-pressure program environment. With a tight deadline in place, the agile built-in flexibility and adaptability made it a perfect fit for the fast-moving nature of the program, allowing the team to quickly respond to changing needs and priorities. By using Agile tools and techniques, the team was able to keep the work aligned with user expectations and adjust as needed along the way. Their ability to stay focused, adapt quickly, and deliver under pressure speaks to their dedication, teamwork, and problem-solving mindset

Faster delivery. Agile development is designed to enable faster delivery of high-quality software by breaking work into small, manageable increments and delivering functional components frequently. By focusing on the most valuable features and continuously improving the product, Agile helps teams work more efficiently while staying aligned with user needs. With the government's timeline fixed, the SPARTA team used Agile to identify and prioritize the key capabilities needed by the fleet end users. By focusing on these high-impact requirements, the team was able to implement critical functionality early in the development cycle. Their strategic use of Agile not only supported timely delivery but also ensured the solution provided real value where it mattered most.

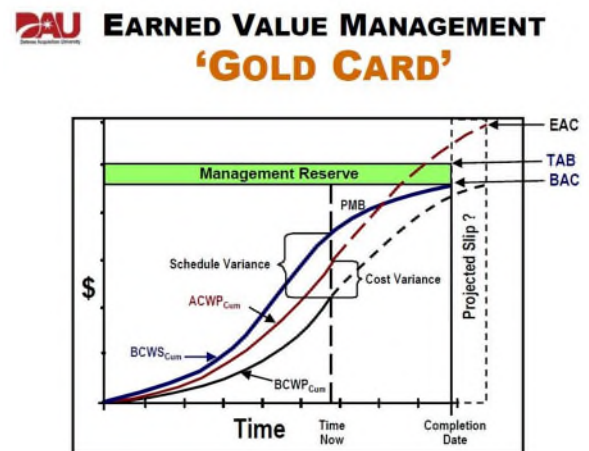
Increased transparency and visibility. One of the key advantages of Agile development is its emphasis on transparency and visibility, which helps teams remain aligned, informed, and adaptable throughout the program lifecycle. Agile encourages consistent communication through practices like daily stand-ups, sprint planning, reviews, and retrospectives, ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of progress and priorities. The SPARTA team not only held regular cadences with the team but also effectively utilized tools such as JIRA, Confluence, and GitLab to provide real-time tracking and enhanced visibility into the program's progress for both the team and stakeholders' awareness.

The SPARTA team's commitment to agile development was a driving force behind the successful delivery of the SPARTA device aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN. Faced with a demanding government timeline, the team recognized that a traditional development approach, such as the waterfall model, would prove to be challenging to meet the government's timeline and the evolving needs of end users. Instead, the team embraced key components of the Agile framework, enabling them to prioritize end-user needs, adapt quickly to changing requirements, and deliver high-value capabilities under pressure. Their ability to remain focused, responsive, and collaborative throughout a complex and fast-paced development cycle demonstrates the innovation and dedication to the SPARTA program.

SECTION 5: METRICS

➤ What are your predictive metrics?

Earned Value. To monitor and control performance and financials for the SPARTA program, the team adopted the Defense Acquisition University's (DAU) "Gold Card" earned value metric. While there was nothing particularly "new" about these metrics, the team rigorously adhered to their guidelines and maintained strict discipline to ensure they accurately reflected performance. The team focused on developing a well-thought-out overall baseline and reinforcing the earned value process with reliable, leader-reviewed Quantifiable Back-Up Data (QBD). This approach was crucial in ensuring that individual contributors presented data accurately, which helped identify legitimate issues requiring additional support. The team prioritized transparency and honesty, even when it was uncomfortable.



Operations, Procurement Metrics and Communications. At the start of the program, the SPARTA team held weekly meetings to review the status of procurement, drawing releases, obsolescence, and build schedules. When these meetings first began, the focus was almost entirely on the Procurement Status Report generated by our internal system. While the data presented during these meeting sessions were both current and accurate, the meetings often became unproductive because the team spent much of the time searching in real time for the status of parts rather than addressing the pressing issues. Recognizing the inefficiency of this process, the team began to shift their approach. Rather than relying solely on raw data from the system, the team began to focus on identifying and discussing key procurement issues that were critical to the program's progress. This meant prioritizing high-impact parts, addressing potential delays in the supply chain, and ensuring that the build schedules were aligned with procurement timelines. Additionally, the team started utilizing visual dashboards and summary reports to highlight the most urgent procurement needs, which allowed for quicker decision-making and clearer communication. This approach not only made the meetings more focused but also empowered team members to collaborate on solutions and improve overall procurement efficiency, ultimately driving the program forward in a more effective and streamlined manner.

➤ How did you perform against these metrics?

Effective Risk Mitigation. The SPARTA program faced numerous risks, both in terms of budget and schedule. The program team worked collaboratively to identify all possible risks, whether they were related

to cost, schedule, performance, technology, or external factors such as regulations or market conditions. By adhering to our established processes, the team continuously discussed, planned, and implemented risk mitigation strategies. As a result, despite ongoing changes and evolving deliverable requirements, our Cost Performance Index (CPI) remained above 1.0 throughout the program.

Material Procurement. Early in the program, the team decided to move away from using the normal procurement tracking methodology spreadsheet. While the spreadsheet contained a wealth of data, it quickly became clear that it was too complex to be an effective tool for decision-making. Recognizing this inefficiency, the team revamped the procurement document structure and associated metrics to focus on streamlining communication and improving decision-making effectiveness. Instead of getting overwhelmed by granular details about individual products or parts, the team's new approach centered around providing a high-level dashboard of procurement progress. By focusing on the broader picture rather than diving into each item, the team could quickly assess how the procurement process was progressing relative to the overall schedule. As a result, the team was able to make more informed decisions and drive the program forward without getting hindered in unnecessary details.

➤ **How do your predictive metrics drive action toward program excellence? Please provide examples.**

The Collins leadership team recognized the government's critical need to provide fleet end users with access to deployable training solutions. Anticipating this requirement, the Collins leadership team proactively committed program resources to support and accelerate the initiative. The SPARTA team tackled over 300 requirements within a demanding timeline by leveraging an agile development framework, which enabled rapid iteration, responsiveness to stakeholder feedback, and tight control of schedule and cost performance. This approach ensured positive Earned Value Management (EVM) metrics across key performance indicators (KPI), including cost performance index (CPI) and schedule performance index (SPI), throughout development phases of the SPARTA program.

Opportunistic. As a result, the first prototype production units were successfully installed aboard an aircraft carrier in April 2024 with additional systems deployed in 2025. Collins has delivered and deployed three SPARTA systems aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, another SPARTA aboard the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON, both in use as part of an integrated training solution, and one stand-alone system aboard the USS CARL VINSON. Following the successful deployment and demonstrated capability of these systems, the U.S. Navy has formally requested expansion of SPARTA installations across all future U.S. aircraft carriers and additional high-priority strategic locations. Collins' forward-leaning approach and commitment to meeting the government's evolving needs have proven to be a significant success and a strong foundation for continued partnership.

"Simulators at Sea brings American aviators a level of readiness our carrier air wing has never experienced while deployed. This training is a game-changing advantage that keeps our forces the most dominant in the skies."

-NAWCAD Commander Rear Adm. John Dougherty IV