DEFENCE

US Navy
resists

Lamps III cuts

WASHINGTON D.C.

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, A Pentagon effort to cut
$6,700 million from the US
' Navy's Light Airborne Multi-
. purpose System (Lamps III)
programme, based on
Sikorsky's SH-60B Seahawk,
is meeting stiff resistance
from the Service.

The Navy admits that a
"significant cost avoidance"
would be made by eliminating
the SH-60's Recovery, Assist,
Secure, and Traversing (Rast)
system, the acoustic pro-
cessor, radar, and electronic-
surveillance equipment. As
the Seahawk's Lamps
missions are frigate-based
anti-submarine warfare
(ASW) and over-the-horizon
targeting, these cuts would
severely degrade the aircraft's
capability.
The Navy describes the
proposed system cuts as so
severe that there would be
"significant operational de-
gradation", and states that
the Lamps III primary plat-
form FFG-7-Class frigates,
"would lose their credibility as
an effective ASW escort".
The Lamps I airborne plat-
form, the Kaman SH-2 Sea-
sprite, has no Rast, the Navy
points out, and can be
launched and recovered only
at up to 8° of ship's roll. This
equates to Sea State Three.
The Service says that, par-
ticularly in winter, Sea State
Four or Five is frequent and
often continuous in areas such
as the North and South At-
lantic. With Rast, the SH-60
has been operated with ship's
roll of up to 28° and pitch of
7°, even though Seahawk is 50
per cent bigger and is more
difficult to handle than Sea-
sprite.
The Navy points out that
elimination of the mission
equipment "would not only
result in mission degradation,
but the cost savings would be
minimal as the system design
has been frozen for some
time." But the Service has
gone so far as to evaluate re-
engining the Seasprite with
the General Electric T700 as a
cost-saving measure. Devel-
opment and procurement
* FLIGHT International, 1 January 1983

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Sikorsky SH-60B Seahawk Lamps III in its new, toned-down paintwork

would cost $800 million with
an initial operational capabil-
ity date of 1988.
The small increase in the
Seasprite/Lamps I combat
effectiveness after re-
engining, combined with an
increased fuel load, would
improve on-station time by 70
per cent. But the Lamps I
"would not compete with the
Seahawk/Lamps III in either
performance or cost-
effectiveness against the
present or projected threat",
says the Navy.

USAF forms

anti-terrorist

unit
HURU3URT FIELD

The US Air Force has formed
a new anti-terrorist, counter-
guerilla air division and trans-
ferred responsibility for such
operations to Military Airlift
Command.

In shifting the Special
Operations Squadrons (SOS)
from Tactical Air Command,
the USAF consolidates the
SO missions with the similar
combat rescue mission, al-
ready the responsibility of
MAC through the Aerospace
Rescue and Recovery Service.
The move will also streamline
budgeting, procurement, and
training, says the USAF.
The new division's head-
quarters will be at Hurlburt
Field, Florida, and will com-
mand SOSs at Clark AB,

Philippines, Rhein-Main AB,
West Germany, and Howard
AB, Panama—a total of 66
fixed- and rotary-wing air-
craft. MAC's ARRS assets in-
clude 121 aircraft for combat
rescue plus 109 assigned to
survival schools, ranges,
missile-site support, and
weather reconnaissance.

No Patriots

for Belgium
BRUSSELS

Belgium expects to save
BFr25,000 million (£310 mil-
lion) by pulling out of the
Nato programme to buy the
Raytheon MIM-104 Patriot
surface-to-air missile. This
should help the Air Force
in its F-16 funding
difficulties—the programme
has been hit by the strength
of the Dollar and last year's
devaluation of the Belgian
Franc. The chances of a
48-aircraft anti-tank helicop-
ter requirement being met are
also improved by the Patriot
decision.

The eight Nike Hercules
squadrons currently deployed
in West Germany by the
Belgian Air Force will still be
phased out between 1983 and
1987. Personnel will be trans-
ferred to the Belgian Army's
two Hawk Battalions, also
stationed in West Germany.
As Nato Patriots deploy in
Germany, the Belgian Hawk
Battalions will return home

to defend strategic points
such as Antwerp, Zeebrugge
naval base, and Nato airfields
in Belgium currently un-
protected.
Belgium's defence budget is
falling at 3 per cent a year,
while Nato members are com-
mitted to a 6 per cent growth
in contributions. One of the
consequences has been a
severe squeeze on Air Force
flying.

Australia

debates

carriers

CANBERRA

Australia's intricate series of
Defence Department commit-
tees is completing a review of
possible replacements for the
veteran aircraft carrier
HMAS Melbourne, in the
light of Britain's refusal to sell
HMS Invincible for A$498
million (£277 million).
A brand new Invincible-
class ship would cost Austra-
lia $750 million (£418 mil-
lion), plus a similar amount
for Sea Harriers, Sea Kings,
and point-defence weapons.
Britain has offered to lease
HMS Hermes to Australia for
£5.6 million a year while the
new carrier is built.

A likely offset is the prod-
uction in Australia of assault
ships to replace Sir Galahad
and Sir Tristram, destroyed
and damaged in the Falklands
War.