

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **RAYTHEON ON GUNSHIPS**

Raytheon TI Systems has received a \$27 million US Air Force contract for 16 AAQ-26 forward-looking infra-red sensors to upgrade nine Lockheed Martin AC-130U and seven AC-130H special-operations gunships.

■ **ALLIANT TAKES FUZE LEAD**

Alliant Techsystems is to acquire part of Motorola's military-fuze business for \$12 million in a move likely to allay US Department of Defense fears over the decision by Motorola, its biggest fuze supplier, to leave the business.

■ **ITT SUPPLIES CV-22 EW**

ITT Avionics has received a \$25 million contract to supply the ALQ-211 integrated radio-frequency countermeasures system for the US Air Force's CV-22 special-operations version of the Bell Boeing Osprey tilt-rotor.

■ **F110 F-15 EVALUATION**

The second General Electric F110-129-powered Boeing F-15E has entered flight tests at the US Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron based at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The full programme is due to run for 12 months and will involve more than 1,000 engine flight hours on two F-15Es. The first aircraft has accumulated more than 90 sorties and over 140 flight hours since it began tests in April.

Bidders prepare for C-5 upgrade

GRAHAM WARWICK AND RAMON LOPEZ/
WASHINGTON DC

A PROGRAMME TO upgrade the avionics in over 120 US Air Force Lockheed C-5 transports is due to get under way in mid-November with release of a draft request for proposals (RFP), according to officials at the 1997 Air Force Association annual convention in Washington from 15-18 September. A formal RFP is expected early in 1998, leading to contract award in September 1998.

Competition is expected for the \$600 million programme from Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon E-Systems. The latter is upgrading the avionics in USAF Lockheed Martin C-130 and C-141 transports. Rockwell-Collins, which is upgrading the avionics in USAF Boeing KC-135 tankers, says that it has yet to decide whether to team, or to bid as a prime contractor.

Lockheed Martin has been trying to interest the Air Force in a more-ambitious C-5 modernisa-

tion, which include a new cockpit re-engineering and system improvements. Raytheon E-Systems' bid will be based on its C-141 upgrade, which includes a digital autopilot and flat-panel displays.

The C-5 looks likely to be the first aircraft equipped to operate within the satellite-based future air-navigation system under the Air Force's Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) initiative. Delays in defining and funding the GATM programme have slowed C-5 upgrade plans, bidders say. □

Airborne laser scores in risk-reduction testing

BOEING HAS completed a key risk-reduction task in its continuing development of an airborne laser anti-ballistic-missile weapon for the US Air Force.

The airborne laser (ABL) prime contractor recently demonstrated that the most critical component, the single oxygen generator (SOG), can meet its ABL mission requirement. The SOG produces oxygen "fuel" for the TRW-designed chemical oxygen-iodine laser.

The early, non-lasing, tests were performed using a section of the ABL flight-weighted laser module (FLM), a building-block for the ABL's high-energy laser.

Boeing says that the tests validate the SOG's design and performance and reduce the risk associated with FLM testing, set for April 1998. Successful demonstration of the FLM is one of several "exit criteria" required for the programme to proceed.

The Boeing/TRW/Lockheed



This artist's impression is one step closer to reality following recent tests

Martin team received a five-year, \$1.1 billion, programme-development and risk-reduction contract in November 1996. This covered the development, manufacture and flight test of an ABL prototype aircraft, to be designated the YAL-1A, using a Boeing 747-400F airframe.

The USAF envisions a fleet of seven ABL aircraft, designed to shoot down short- and medium-range ballistic missiles during their

boost phases. The industry team stands to earn as much as \$6 billion if the project goes ahead.

It is reported that a draft US General Accounting Office study concludes that the USAF has yet to quantify the atmospheric turbulence that the weapon must overcome to destroy enemy missiles at long ranges. A key challenge is to overcome the atmosphere's tendency to dissipate the laser beam. □

Combatants line up for special-operations C-130 support work

AT LEAST FIVE US defence companies are competing for the right to provide the US Air Force with long-term contractor support for five special-operations variants of the Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules.

The Integrated Weapon System Support Programme (IWSSP), worth \$1 billion, is intended to cover single-source maintenance and upgrade work over a ten-year

period for the USAF's 87 special-operations C-130s.

The five bidders are understood to include Ball Aerospace, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon E-Systems. The list would shrink, however, if Lockheed Martin's acquisition of Northrop Grumman gets the required US anti-trust approval.

The MC-130H, MC-130E and

AC-130H are Lockheed Martin variants, while the AC-130U Spectre gunship is a Boeing development through its acquisition of Rockwell International's defence units. The MC-130P, however, was modified by Smiths Industries.

The initial contract will cover support of all five C-130 variants for a decade, and for completion of AC-130U development work. At the end of the ten-year period, only

the MC-130H and the AC-130U will remain in service. Continued work on those aircraft will be provided through contract options.

The USAF is expected to release the draft request for proposals (RFP) on 30 September, with the final RFP due out on 5 January, 1998. Last bids are expected from the contractors in April, and the USAF will select the IWSSP winner in August 1998. □