

Tiger gets go-ahead while NH90 waits

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THE LONG-AWAITED contract for 160 Eurocopter Tiger anti-tank helicopters was signed by France and Germany on 18 June. Hopes that the four-nation memorandum of understanding (MoU) approving industrialisation and production of an initial 152 NH Industries NH90 transport and naval helicopters would be signed at around the same time were not fulfilled, however.

The Tiger deal is worth almost Fr20 billion (\$3.3 billion) and will lead to the first of 80 helicopters for Germany being delivered in 2002. France has committed to purchasing the same number, with initial delivery the year after. The two countries have a requirement for a total of 212 Tigers for Germany

and 215 for France, with delivery stretching into the second decade of the next century.

The order means that export efforts will be stepped up. Near term potential customers include Spain, with a requirement for up to 25 anti-tank helicopters. Turkey needs around 100 and Australia at least 20. The Tiger's principal competitor is the Boeing AH-64 Apache in all three competitions.

French defence minister Alain Richard says that the NH90 contract, worth between Fr15 billion and Fr20 billion, will be signed "before the end of the year". "All of the partners are agreed on the price and delivery timescales of the NH90," he says.

Changes in the requirements of each partner nation are still being made, however, the Netherlands



Tiger is awarded its production stripes but NH90 (above) waits for go-ahead

having recently delayed delivery of its 20 Naval Frigate Helicopters (NFHs) by four years, to 2007, because of budget problems. Germany and Italy are committed to a combat search-and-rescue version of the helicopter.

The first batch of 152 machines will be made up of:

■ France: 27 NFHs, first delivery 2004/5;

■ Germany: four NFHs, first delivery 2007, 61 Tactical

Transport Helicopters (TTH), first delivery 2003;

■ Italy: 25 TTHs, first delivery 2004, 15 NFHs, first delivery 2004;

■ The Netherlands: 20 NFHs.

The four nations require 619 helicopters. France, Germany and Italy will each have final assembly lines, although Germany will build only the TTH, taking its NFHs from the French line at Marignanne. Dutch NFHs will be sourced from Italy. □

Raytheon contests MEADS decision

RAYTHEON FILED a formal protest on 17 June to overturn its loss of the Medium Extended Air Defence System (MEADS), a joint development being undertaken by the USA, Germany and Italy to field the next-generation, highly mobile, medium-range battlefield air defence weapon.

The NATO MEADS Organisation (NAMEADSMO) on 19 May awarded Lockheed Martin a \$300 million contract to begin

developing the \$12 billion MEADS project. The US team member for the three-year risk reduction effort is allied with Italy's Alenia and Germany's Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace (Dasa).

Raytheon will not disclose reasons for the protest. NAMEADSMO has until the middle of July to review the bidding and give an opinion. Should the protest be turned down by NAMEADSMO, Raytheon can either drop the matter, seek arbit-

ration by a panel formed by MEADS member nations, or file a formal protest to the US General Accounting Office, which reviews US Defense Department contract awards.

The Lockheed Martin-led team is to demonstrate a prototype system in 2002. The hit-to-kill Lockheed Martin Vought Systems Patriot Advanced Capability air defence missile will be used as part of MEADS. □

Singapore wants more Chinooks

SINGAPORE PLANS to purchase an additional four Boeing CH-47SD Super Chinook helicopters to supplement six earlier CH-47Ds and four improved -47SDs already on order. It is also embarking on a search for six to 12 naval helicopters to equip a planned fleet of new corvettes. Selection of the maritime helicopter is expected to be tied to a larger requirement for a Bell UH1H utility replacement.

In the meantime, senior industry sources say a request for proposals is expected to be issued for a new multi-role fighter for the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) next year. The RSAF may make a fighter selection as early as 2001, according to the sources.

Contenders are the Dassault Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon, Lockheed Martin F-16 Block 50+ and Sukhoi Su-30. Singapore has joined the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) programme as a low-level participant, but the JSF is unlikely to be available in time. □

C-130 avionics upgrade gets another HUD option

FLIGHT VISIONS has teamed with French-owned Pilkington Optronics to offer a head-up display (HUD) for the US Air Force's forthcoming C-130 avionics modernisation programme. The US low-cost HUD manufacturer has held talks with the three likely bidders for the contract to upgrade the USAF's Hercules fleet - Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.

Sales director David Klinchuck

says a request for proposals to upgrade the C-130s is expected in September, leading to a contract award next year. Flight Visions, based in Sugar Grove, Illinois, is offering the potential prime contractors an overhead-mounted derivative of its Night Hawk HUD, as well as flat panel multifunction displays. Pilkington will supply the optical combiner.

The Night Hawk has been

selected by Lockheed Martin for its Joint Strike Fighter concept demonstrators. It is a wide field-of-view development of the Sparrow Hawk HUD being retrofitted to US Navy Grumman F-14s. Flight Dynamics and Marconi Avionics are the probable competitors.

Flight Visions is to incorporate Israeli company BVR's embedded air combat training system in its FV-3000 mission computer. □