

E-8C DELIVERY

Northrop Grumman has delivered the first Block 20 E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (Joint STARS) equipped with commercial off-the-shelf computer systems. Processing power and reliability have been boosted with the use of commercial items such as the dual redundant Mercury RACE and Compaq's Open VMS AlphaServer ES40CV systems. The aircraft is the eighth E-8C delivered to the US Air Force.

C-130 REQUIREMENT

The Philippines is seeking additional surplus Lockheed Martin C-130s and Bell UH-1s from the US Government to support a counter-insurgency war against Muslim separatists in the south of the archipelago. The Abu Sayyaf movement has links to the Al Qaeda terrorist network, claim Philippine officials.

ISRAELI PROMISE

India has been given guarantees by Israel that a proposed deal for Elta Phalcon airborne early warning systems will not be hampered by the USA. A senior Israeli defence ministry delegation recently visited New Delhi in an effort to finalise the \$1 billion deal.

FORCE DEVELOPMENT PETER LA FRANCHI / CANBERRA

RAAF launches Air 7000 for future maritime needs

Australia will use the project as a vehicle for co-ordinating the replacement of P-3C Orions

Australian defence planners are proposing a new project to co-ordinate future airborne maritime surveillance assets operated by the Royal Australian Air Force.

The new project, tentatively designated Air 7000, is being considered as a vehicle for co-ordinating the replacement or upgrade of the RAAF's existing 17 Lockheed P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and a proposed purchase of Northrop Grumman RQ-4A Global Hawk long-endurance unmanned air vehicles.

The project would seek to develop RAAF-operated airborne maritime surveillance assets as an integrated system.

Australian capability development plans are calling for an initial Global Hawk purchase to be funded in the 2004 defence budget, while the upgrade or replacement of the P-3 fleet is to be funded in 2007.

The Australian Defence Force

Headquarters Force Development Aerospace branch, which is defining the Air 7000 concept, is proposing that an initial Global Hawk acquisition occur via existing project arrangements. All P-3C related projects and any follow-on Global Hawk purchase, however, would be subsumed into the overall Air 7000 framework.

The new project is likely to be put forward for formal inclusion in the Australian Defence Capability plan in February, with acquisition funds again targeted at the 2007 national defence budget.

Meanwhile, Australia may be preparing to fast-track the purchase of up to three additional Boeing 737 Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft as part of its evolving response to the international war on terrorism.

The Australian government is to consider a new strategic review early next year, with this examin-

ing the implications of the war against terrorism on the Asia-Pacific region, and considering options for overhauling military capability plans finalised in June this year to better deal with changing threats.

Well-placed Australian government sources say the capability plans re-think is emphasising "force multipliers" with AEW&C and in-flight refuelling seen as "obvious" targets for fast tracking.

Australia signed a A\$2.33 billion (\$1.2 billion) contract with Boeing in December last year to acquire an initial four Wedgetails. The contract included options for two plus one aircraft, with the first option to be exercised by the end of next year.

Meanwhile, Boeing has completed the second major milestone on the Wedgetail with the completion of the preliminary design review for the the mission computing subsystem hardware.

TACTICAL AIRLIFT PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON DC

Lockheed Martin revamps C-130 modification business after setback

Lockheed Martin is regrouping its C-130 modifications and sustainment business in the wake of the loss of the US Air Force's Avionics Modernisation Programme (AMP) to Boeing, with the aim of marketing a lower cost and less sophisticated upgrade package to international Hercules operators.

The company has forged a fresh post-AMP team around its Marietta-based Aeronautics, Owego-based System Integration, Orlando-based Information Systems and Greenville-based Aircraft and Logistic Centers business units. Its task is to separate upgrade options among the 60 or more countries operating the Hercules from potential buyers of the next generation C-130J.

"We're taking a look at the whole market," says Dave Larson, Lockheed Martin director C-130 modifi-

cations and sustainment. "Few countries can afford it or are looking at a full-blown AMP kit. We're establishing solutions to meet these countries' needs," he adds.

Lockheed Martin sees a baseline requirement for an avionics upgrade to ensure global air traffic management compliance, such as the addition of traffic collision avoidance systems, protected ILS and improved required navigation performance, as well as addressing system obsolescence. The company is also looking at modifications such as an in-flight refuelling tanker and a fuselage stretch.

The company sees a modification market for 150 aircraft in 15 countries, with pending avionics upgrade requirements in Brazil, Egypt, Greece, Israel and Malaysia, while Sweden is looking at a life



The new group will take a fresh look at C-130 modification options

extension for eight C-130E aircraft. The latter two countries have signed contracts with Lockheed Martin to convert to tankers two C-130Hs and a single C-130E respectively.

Other countries like Canada and New Zealand are trying to decide between upgrading existing fleets or acquiring replacement C-130Js. In Canada's case, its Hercules fleet is among the oldest with one high-time aircraft having clocked up

42,000h and the benefits of an upgrade are debatable. "They could replace the aircraft with the C-130J at no extra cost of ownership and with fewer aircraft," says Larson.

■ Lockheed Martin has delivered the first of three stretched C-130J-30s to the Rhode Island Air National Guard (ANG). The aircraft features a 4.6m (15ft) longer fuselage. The remaining two aircraft will be delivered in December.