

# JSF contest nears final phase

THE CLIMATIC final stage of the US Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) competition is to begin on 15 April, with the release of a request for information (RFI) to the Boeing and Lockheed Martin teams.

The RFI is expected to outline a new acquisition strategy. A US Department of Defense assessment of alternatives to the "winner takes all" approach was to be completed by the end of March. The final JSF operational requirements document was approved in mid-March, clearing the way for negotiations on the engineering and

manufacturing development (EMD) phase to begin.

JSF programme office director Gen Mike Hough believes it is "prudent" to revise the acquisition strategy to maintain competition in fighters, engines and avionics for future US requirements. "We got to where we are [on JSF] with competition," he stresses.

Hough says the review looked at options that would not affect "cost, initial operational capability [IOC] and international participation". The average JSF unit cost "is still in the low to mid 30s [millions of dol-

lars]", Hough says. The schedule calls for EMD to begin next April, leading to a first flight in 2005 and IOC in 2008.

Negotiations on international participation are under way. The UK, as the only full collaborative partner, is negotiating a 10% stake in the EMD at an expected cost of \$2.5 billion, says Jon Schreiber, JSF programme office director of international programmes.

Negotiations begin this month with the Netherlands. Canada, Denmark, Italy, and Norway have indicated that they want to carry

on discussions, Schreiber says.

Hough predicts that "20 to 30" countries will eventually join the programme. The bulk of these will be foreign military sales (FMS) participants, which will pay a fee to receive information on the aircraft, says Schreiber. No talks on joining EMD have yet been scheduled with Israel, Singapore and Turkey, the FMS participants in the current JSF concept demonstration phase.

The UK, if it stays in the programme, is expected to sign by September and participate in source selection. □

## NATO invites Turkey to its NATAR party

TURKEY HAS been asked to join the NATO Advanced Technology Radar (NATAR) programme to develop an airborne ground surveillance system.

A NATAR project office was formally established in Brussels in February, staffed by representatives from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway and the USA. The project office briefed a Turkish defence and industry delegation in late March. Other NATO members have also been invited to join the programme.

The project office has been tasked with presenting a proposal for six NATO-owned and -operated surveillance aircraft. The project definition phase, which includes drafting the memorandum of understanding, request for proposals and programme charter required to launch NATAR development, could take two years.

NATO has an urgent requirement for a ground surveillance system, with first deliveries required in 2008. Under NATAR, a derivative of the active-array radar being developed by Northrop Grumman for the US Air Force's E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System would be installed in an Airbus A320-family aircraft.

France, Germany Italy and the Netherlands are working on the SOSTAR technology demonstrator for the same requirement. □

## UK implements Defence Review with joint service Harrier force



Harriers and Sea Harriers now share a joint command as well as deck space

STEWART PENNEY/LONDON

THE FINAL elements of the UK's 1998 Strategic Defence Review have been implemented by the Ministry of Defence with the formation of a combined joint service BAE Systems Harrier force and a single organisation responsible for supply and engineering throughout the three services.

Joint Force Harrier (JFH) - previously Joint Force 2000 - came into being on 1 April and combines the Royal Air Force's Harrier GR7s and Royal Navy Sea Harrier FA2s under a single command.

The force will be part of 3 Group within a restructured Strike Command, which became active

on the same day (*Flight International*, 8-14 December, 1999). Also within 3 Group is the RAF's maritime patrol aircraft and search-and-rescue helicopters.

A senior 3 Group source says that JFH will allow the UK to react better to contingencies and is a key element of the shift to expeditionary air power. It will also develop RAF operations from the RN's three *Invincible*-class carriers, with the three front-line Harrier GR7 units regularly embarking to maintain shipboard operations proficiency. The official says the ideal carrier complement will be eight each of Sea Harriers and GR7s.

JFH will give the UK greater flexibility, says the source, with the

force able to deploy with air defence and ground attack elements from land bases or the aircraft carriers.

The two Harrier types will be replaced by the Future Carrier Borne Aircraft (FCBA) from around 2010. The Joint Strike Fighter is considered the lead FCBA contender, but the Boeing F/A-18E/F, Dassault Rafale, a navalised Eurofighter and a "Harrier 3" are also in the running.

Later this year, 1Sqn will move from RAF Wittering to join 3 and 4 Sqn at RAF Cottesmore. The RN's two operational Sea Harrier units will move to Cottesmore from Yeovilton in 2003, with an operational conversion unit joining the RAF's equivalent at Wittering, establishing dedicated operational and training stations.

The formation of the tri-service Defence Logistics Organisation on 3 April is designed to save 20% of the UK's logistics costs - £4.7 billion (\$7.5 billion) annually - by combining air force, army and navy support. Key aerospace elements include the Defence Aviation Repair Agency and the Defence Transport and Movements Agency.

The aim is to eliminate duplication and to use best practices from commercial organisations. □