**New Zealand to buy four P-8A Poseidon patrol aircraft for $1.6bn**

[***https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/new-zealand-boeing-p-8a-poseidon/***](https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/new-zealand-boeing-p-8a-poseidon/)

The New Zealand Government has reached an agreement to purchase four Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft from the US in a NZD2.346bn ($1.6bn) deal.

The procurement will allow the government to replace the existing P-3K2 Orion fleet, which has been operated by the Royal New Zealand Air Force since the 1960s and will reach the end of its expected operational life in 2025.

Acquisition, training systems, infrastructure and service introduction costs are included in the deal’s total purchase price.

The new P-8As are scheduled to be operational from 2023.

They will allow the government to support airborne maritime surveillance, humanitarian aid, disaster response, and resource protection in the South Pacific region.

New Zealand Defence Minister Ron Mark said: “The purchase ensures the defence force can continue to deliver the country’s maritime surveillance, resource protection, humanitarian and disaster response around New Zealand and across the South Pacific.

“This decision strengthens the coalition government’s pacific reset by providing a maritime patrol capability with the significant range and endurance needed to assist our partners in the region.

“The purchase enables New Zealand to continue to deploy in a wide range of airborne maritime situations independently, and when required, work effectively with partners, including Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which all operate or will operate the aircraft.”

The new aircraft will also allow the government to continue to participate in global peace and security operations.

The P-8As will be operated by No 5 Squadron, which will move from Whenuapai to Ohakea air force base.

**UK requests $650m sale of AIM-120D air-to-air missiles from US**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/uk-aim-120d-air-missiles-us/>

The US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has notified Congress of a possible sale of the AIM-120D advanced medium range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAMs) to the UK for an estimated $650m.

Requested by the UK Government, the proposed deal includes the sale of up to 200 AIM-120D missiles, in addition to containers, weapon system support and test equipment.

Approved by the US State Department, the sale includes the delivery of site surveying, repair and return support, spare parts, maintenance and personnel training.

The potential deal also includes engineering, logistics, and technical support services for the US Government and contractor.

Acquisition of the AIM-120D missiles will enable the UK Royal Air Force (RAF) to enhance its aircraft capabilities to ensure mutual defence, regional security and force modernisation, as well as improving US and Nato interoperability.

The deal will help increase the RAF’s ability to defend the country against future threats while contributing to future Nato operations.

Raytheon Missile Systems Company will serve as the principal contractor.

Capable of addressing all troop requirements, the AMRAAM missile is a versatile and proven weapon system that offers operational flexibility in a wide range of scenarios, including air-to-air and surface launches.

To date, the missile has been installed on to a number of aircraft such as F-16, F/A-18, Eurofighter Typhoon, Tornado and Harrier.

**GA-ASI’s MQ-9B SkyGuardian RPA completes trans-Atlantic flight**

[***https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/ga-asi-mq-9b-skyguardian-trans-atlantic-flight/***](https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/ga-asi-mq-9b-skyguardian-trans-atlantic-flight/)

General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI)’s MQ-9B SkyGuardian remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) has successfully completed its first trans-Atlantic flight.

Taking off from the company’s Flight Test and Training Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota, US, the unmanned aircraft landed at the UK Royal Air Force (RAF) air station in Fairford, Gloucestershire, after covering 3,760nm in 24 hours and two minutes.

Currently, the GA-ASI SkyGuardian is the world’s first medium-altitude, long-endurance (MALE) RPA to complete a trans-Atlantic flight.

GA-ASI chief executive officer Linden Blue said: “This historic event was a demonstration of the endurance and civil airspace capability of the MQ-9B SkyGuardian, and it is fitting to do this as part of the centennial celebration of the RAF.”

The RAF is acquiring the MQ-9B SkyGuardian RPA as part of its Protector RG Mk1 programme.

In order to carry out the flight successfully, mobile satellite communications (SATCOM) provider Inmarsat delivered its SwiftBroadband SATCOM for the RPA’s ground control station to communicate with and control the aircraft.

SwiftBroadband will also be used in the final configuration of the aircraft to offer upgraded capabilities such as automatic take-off and landing.

As the latest variant of GA-ASI’s multi-mission Predator B fleet, the MQ-9B SkyGuardian RPA is a ‘certifiable’ STANAG 4671-compliant version of the MQ-9 Predator B product line.

Capable of carrying multiple mission payloads, the highly modular aircraft features an advanced detect and avoid system, including space, weight and power provisions, in order to facilitate the retrofitting of an airborne due regard radar for operation in non-cooperative airspace.

**USAF awards $420m MRO contract for Rolls-Royce’s F137 engine fleet**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/usaf-mro-rolls-royces-f137-engine-fleet/>

The US Air Force (USAF) has awarded a new sustainment contract worth up to $420m to Rolls-Royce for engine maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) of the service’s Global Hawk unmanned surveillance aircraft fleet.

The indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contract will continue for six years and will also include MRO engine services for the US Navy fleet of Triton unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

Furthermore, the agreement includes delivery of programme management and sustainment engineering services for Rolls-Royce’s F137 turbofan engines, which are engineered and manufactured at the company’s facilities in Indianapolis, US.

The USAF designation for the company’s AE 3007H engine, F137 helps power the Global Hawk and Triton UAVs, as well as a number of commercial and business aviation aircraft.

MRO services on the unmanned jets will be carried out at Tinker Air Force Base (AFB) in Oklahoma, US, where the USAF has established a public-private partnership to develop and manage an engine depot in collaboration with Rolls-Royce.

Rolls-Royce Defence Services president Paul Craig said: “Rolls-Royce has a long and successful history of supporting USAF and navy engines, and our innovative public-private partnership at Tinker AFB has enabled us to work together in a new way and will be a key component of maximising engine availability.

“This new contract includes engine services for the navy’s Triton fleet, and we look forward to continuing this public-private partnership for years to come, focusing on customer support and enhancing mission success.”

The depot will be the company’s first engine facility to be operated at Tinker AFB, which serves as the base for the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center.

Additional F137 work will be performed at a Rolls-Royce’s engine facility in Montreal, Canada.

**Hungary to receive 20 H145M aircraft with HForce weapon system**

[***https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/hungary-20-hforce-weapon-system-h145m/***](https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/hungary-20-hforce-weapon-system-h145m/)

Airbus is set to provide the Hungarian Ministry of Defence with 20 units of H145M military helicopters fitted with the new HForce weapon system.

Delivery will be carried out under the Zrinyi 2026 framework of the military modernisation programme.

The company will also be responsible for supplying an extensive training and support package to Hungary.

Airbus chief executive officer Tom Enders said: “We are honoured to be of service, once more, to the Hungarian Ministry of Defence whom we today welcome as a new customer for our H145M helicopters.

“With this new order, we are fostering our excellent and trustful relationship with the Hungarian Armed Forces after their acquisition of two A319 military troop transporters last year.”

Built by Airbus Helicopters, the HForce weapon system will enable the country to equip and operate its helicopters with a large set of ballistic or guided air-to-ground and air-to-air weapons.

The H145M is a light twin-engine helicopter that is able to carry out a wide range of operations such as troop transport, utility, surveillance, air rescue, armed reconnaissance and medical evacuation.

With a maximum take-off weight of 3.7t, the aircraft feature a fast roping system, high-performance camera, fire support equipment, ballistic protection and an electronic countermeasures system.

The new Hungarian H145Ms feature the Helionix digital avionics suite, which includes a high-performance four-axis autopilot. This helps increase pilot safety and reduces workload.

The low acoustic feature of the Airbus H145M makes it the quietest helicopter in its class.

**UK RAF receives delivery of 20th Atlas military transport aircraft**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/uk-royal-air-force-atlas-military-transport-aircraft/>

The UK Royal Air Force (RAF) has received the delivery of the 20th next-generation A400M Atlas military transport aircraft at the Brize Norton air station, the base for the air mobility force.

The delivery coincided with trials conducted to test the aircraft’s ability to deliver cargo by parachute in addition to undergoing air-to-air refuelling (AAR).

UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: “From deploying troops to transporting armoured vehicles, the Atlas aircraft has played a global role in operations in the Middle East against Daesh and providing vital relief in the Caribbean.

“As we come closer to receiving the full fleet of aircraft, we can be proud of the role the Atlas has played in supporting the RAF lift-off into a new century of air power.”

The cargo delivery trial was conducted using containers weighing approximately 1t, which were dropped in sequence over Salisbury Plain.

The test was carried out by a UK aircraft that carried crew members from the RAF’s Air Warfare Centre along with other personnel from international defence technology company QinetiQ.

During the AAR trial performed near Seville, Spain, an Airbus A400M Atlas aircraft received fuel from a UK RAF Voyager tanker aircraft over a range of altitudes and speeds.

The new Atlas military transport aircraft has formally entered into service with the airforce and is ready to commence crew training before conducting operational deployment.

The international Atlas programme is supporting approximately 8,000 job opportunities in the country.

To date, the RAF has ordered 22 units of the Airbus Atlas aircraft that are expected to be delivered to the service by the early 2020s.

**UK MoD uses Cobham AAR system for F-35B receiver clearance**

[***https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/uk-mod-cobham-aar-system-f-35b/***](https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/uk-mod-cobham-aar-system-f-35b/)

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has used Cobham’s air-to-air refuelling (AAR) systems and modelling expertise to help attain F-35B receiver clearance for mid-air refuelling from the Royal Air Force’s (RAF) Voyager tanker.

For the first time, AAR modelling and simulation technology provided by the company has been used in the aerial refuelling clearance process for a receiver aircraft.

Cobham Simulation and Modelling manager Henry Clarke said: “We use modelling to help our customers test the performance and boundaries of our AAR equipment in a highly accurate and realistic way.

“Our aim is to provide them with enough substantiated evidence that they can minimise the number of flight trials needed to test the equipment thus saving a great deal of time and cost, as well as reducing pilot and aircraft risk”

The company will deliver wing air refuelling pods and centre-line refuelling systems to the RAF’s Voyager tanker, in addition to the probe on the F35B Lightning II short take-off / vertical landing (STOVL) variant and the F-35C carrier variant.

Clarke added: “To support the MoD we validated our high fidelity AAR system model against existing flight test results and were then able to accurately reproduce the refuelling environment for the Voyager and F-35.

“Within this simulated reality, we were able to thoroughly test the performance of the aircraft AAR systems across the whole refuelling envelope.”

Built by Lockheed Martin, the F-35B is the world’s first supersonic STOVL stealth aircraft specifically designed to operate from simple bases and a wide number of air-capable vessels near front-line combat zones.

**Rafael and Lockheed sign MoU to market SPICE missile kits**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/rafael-lockheed-mou-spice-missile-kits/>

Israel’s Rafael Advanced Defense Systems has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Lockheed Martin to evaluate potential markets and user requirements for its Smart, Precise Impact and Cost-Effective (SPICE) missile guidance kits.

Currently in service with the Israeli Air Force (IAF) and other international customers, the system uses a new advanced electro-optical seeker with unique scene-matching algorithms, navigation guidance and homing techniques.

The system can effectively attain operational missions during both day and night in adverse weather without global positioning system (GPS) and at a low lifecycle cost.

Rafael Advanced Defense Systems air and command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance division executive vice-president and head Yuval Miller said: “SPICE is a leading air-to-surface weapon system offering US and international airforces operating Lockheed Martin’s platforms, as well as strategic bomber aircraft, an important complement to their existing operational capabilities.

“SPICE’s unique features greatly enhance the US’ ability to operate in contested environments. We are excited to engage in cooperation with Lockheed Martin to make SPICE available as a US-made system, adapted to fully meet US standards.”

The two companies will evaluate the market for two of Rafael’s precision-guided missile kit variants, the 453kg SPICE 1000 system, and the 907kg SPICE 2000 weapon.

Rafael’s missile kit is a stand-off, autonomous, air-to-surface weapon system that has the capability to destroy targets with precision and at high-attack volumes in a GPS-denied environment.

**Kongsberg to deliver JSM test missiles for F-35A integration phase**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/kongsberg-jsm-test-missiles-f-35a/>

The Norwegian Defence Materiel Agency has awarded a new contract to Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace for Joint Strike Missile (JSM) test missiles.

The Nkr700m ($85.56m) contract will see the delivery of the JSM test missiles for the integration phase on the F-35A Lightning II joint strike fighter.

Capable of being employed against both sea and land-based targets, the JSM is Norway’s advanced anti-surface warfare missile developed to be carried by the F-35A aircraft.

Norway serves as a partner nation for the development of the fifth-generation joint strike fighter jet.

Following a successful flight test in March and finalisation of the development phase in June, the JSM project is entering an F-35 Lightning II integration phase that will continue until 2023.

The missile was tested at the US Air Force’s Edwards Air Force Base on F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft from the 416th Flight Test Squadron.

Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace president Eirik Lie said: “The JSM project continues on schedule and is the only fifth-generation missile available on F-35 representing a significant market potential.”

The integration phase includes the delivery of a wide range of JSM test missiles, and captive-carriage, safe separation, and live-firing tests.

Employing a highly accurate navigation system and low-altitude flight profile, the JSM features an automatic target recognition capability with an advanced imaging infrared seeker.

The missiles facilitate launch platform survivability and flexible mission routing to help enhance survivability and mission success.

**USAF receives delivery of Northrop BACN Global Hawk aircraft**

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/usaf-northrop-bacn-global-hawk-aircraft/>

The US Air Force (USAF) has received the Global Hawk autonomous surveillance aircraft carrying the Battlefield Airborne Communications Node (BACN).

Developed by Northrop Grumman, BACN is a high-altitude aircraft that translates and distributes voice communications and other battlespace information from a wide number of sources.

BACN is used to bridge the gaps between the systems in addition to extending communications among different users and networks. This will help provide improved situational awareness to the USAF fleet.

When combined with the Global Hawk autonomous aircraft, BACN provides troops with important information to pursue and defeat the enemy.

The airborne communications node features an airborne executive processor (AEP) that allows for a persistent gateway in the sky that receives, bridges and distributes communication among all troops on a battlefield.

To date, more than 10,000 combat missions have been carried out by BACN that helped connect troops in the air with ground forces.

Northrop’s Global Hawk aircraft are capable of operating at altitudes of up to 60,000ft for more than 30 hours, surveying thousands of square miles on a single mission.

The unmanned system carries a number of sensor payloads that enable military commanders to collect near real-time imagery and use radar to detect moving or stationary targets on the ground.

In addition, the aircraft provides airborne communications and data sharing capabilities to military units in challenging environments.

In July 2016, the Global Hawk high-altitude, long-endurance intelligence gathering aircraft surpassed 200,000 flight hours.