

Air Force T-345A and Army NEES Multi-Year Programs Launched

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Leonardo has been awarded an initial 500 million euro contract to develop an upgraded version of the A-129 Mangusta for the Italian army and to produce the first five M345A jet trainers for the Italian air force. (Leonardo photo)

The Defense Ministry, through Air Armaments and Airworthiness Directorate (DAAA) of Segredifesa, has awarded Leonardo SpA a production contract for the first batch of T-345A aircraft. They will form the initial core of a wider integrated training system, which will also include a ground based training System (GBTS), being acquired to provide basic training for future military pilots.

Leonardo was also awarded the contract for the development of the Nuovo Elicottero da Esplorazione e Scorta, or New Reconnaissance and Escort Helicopter (NEES), intended to replace the AH-129 helicopter presently in service with the Army.

The signing of the two agreements took place in the new headquarters of the General Secretariat of Defence and National Armaments Directorate in Centocelle, in the presence of the Secretary General of Defence, Gen. Carlo Magrassi, the Army Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Danilo Errico, the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Enzo Vecciarelli, Dr. Giovanni Soccodato, of Leonardo SpA and, representing the Ministry of Economic Development, Dr. Stefano Firpo and Dr. Salvatore Mignano.

The event was opened by a short speech of General Magrassi who thanked all parties for permitting, thanks to their intense work, a very quick launch of this important start-up phase of both programs. General Francesco Langella, chief of the DAAA, then stressed the more

technical aspects, including those relating to certification, as these two programs will constitute a test case for the application of new European legislation.

The contracts were signed by Dr. Grazia Nunnari (DAAA) on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, and by Mr. Filippo Bagnato (Leonardo Aircraft Division) and Mr Daniele Romiti (Leonardo Helicopter Division) for industry.

The T-345A aircraft, derived from the M345 HTE "High Efficiency Trainer" project initiated by Leonardo's Aircraft Division, constitutes another significant milestone in the evolution of the training mission, and of the operational capability of the national defense system, and particularly of the Air Force.

From the capability point of view, this training system will be inserted between the initial basic flight screening and the T-346 advanced trainer, to meet the training requirements of the Integrated Training System adopted by the Air Force.

This new aircraft, which will initially complement and eventually replace the T-339A currently in service, is a successful example of a project designed and manufactured according to the design-to-cost concept (for both unit cost and flight hour cost) which allows savings throughout its life cycle.

Also innovative is the certification approach for the entire system, based on the European EMAR 2 Directive, that DAAA is applying to all new-development systems.

The project is a result of the cooperation between the national aviation industry's high-technology research and development, as well as the synergy between the technical and administrative capabilities of the General Defence Secretariat of Defence and the Ministry of Economical Development.

The NEES program stems from the Italian Army's need to replace the current AH-129C / AH-129D "Mongoose" attack helicopter, and to introduce new components, sensors and weapons better suited to the new threats and new theaters of operation in which helicopters will be called to operate.

The program's development tempo is especially significant. Born from an operational requirement issued in December 2014, the schedule provides for the production of a prototype for the development phase; the production of three pre-production helicopters; the certification and qualification of an Initial Operational Capability (IOC); and updating of the three pre-production helicopters in this configuration. Finally, initial logistical support, including training of technicians and specialists, is also included in the same contract.

The two contracts, which will provide a significant return on investment in terms of industrial capabilities and employment, have a total value of over 500 million euros, to be paid out by the Ministry of Economic Development over the coming years.

Agreement with the Italian Ministry of Defence for the New M-345 Trainer and for the Development of the New Reconnaissance and Escort Helicopter

ROME - Leonardo has signed with the Italian National Armaments Directorate of the Italian Defence Ministry two contracts for an initial batch of five Aermacchi M-345 trainer aircraft and for the first phase of development and delivery programme of the new reconnaissance and escort helicopter (*Nuovo Elicottero da Esplorazione e Scorta, NEES—Ed.*) for the Italian Army. The combined value of the contracts is in excess of 500 million euro.

Mauro Moretti, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of Leonardo, said: "The signing of these two contracts is the result of constructive discussions between the Italian Government and industry, which helped identify the requirements and the best technological answers. Thanks to this joint understanding, we'll be able to deliver advanced solutions to our national customer by optimizing available financial resources and developing new technologies, skills and industrial processes in our country."

The Italian Air Force has a total requirement for around 45 M-345s (designated as T-345 by the Italian Armed Forces) to progressively replace the 137 in-service MB-339 aircraft which entered into operation in 1982.

The new aircraft will work alongside the fleet of 18 twin-engine Aermacchi M-346s already ordered and currently used by the Italian Air Force for the advanced phase of pilot training. Together, the two aircraft types will form the world's most advanced training system for military pilots.

The M-345, thanks to its high performance and advanced ground-based training systems, will provide the Italian Air Force with a significant boost in the effectiveness of training, improved efficiency and a reduction in operational costs. The first delivery is expected by 2019.

The multiyear contract for the new reconnaissance and escort helicopter (NEES) of the Italian Army envisages the study, development, industrialization, production and testing of a prototype and three initial production aircraft. Through this new programme, based on a total requirement for 48 units, the Italian Army will be able to replace the current fleet of AW129 which are expected to be retired from service by 2025, after over 35 years in operations.

The NEES programme will benefit from the long operational expertise gained by the Italian Army thanks to the AW129 and from the know-how of Leonardo in this specific helicopter sector. It will allow the service to introduce an even more technologically advanced product, with greater performance and lower operating costs, to meet arising needs in evolving scenarios for the next 30 years.

Leonardo is among the top ten global players in Aerospace, Defence and Security and Italy's main industrial company. As a single entity from January 2016, organised into seven

business divisions (Helicopters; Aircraft; Aero-structures; Airborne & Space Systems; Land & Naval Defence Electronics; Defence Systems; Security & Information Systems), Leonardo operates in the most competitive international markets by leveraging its areas of technology and product leadership. Listed on the Milan Stock Exchange (LDO), at 31 December 2015 Leonardo recorded consolidated revenues of 13 billion Euros and has a significant industrial presence in Italy, the UK and the U.S.