

AgustaWestland awarded a €584 million for the upgrade of 30 Royal Navy's EH101

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AgustaWestland, a Finmeccanica company, is pleased to announce it has been awarded a major contact by the UK Ministry of Defence for the upgrade of 30 EH101 Merlin HM Mk1 helicopters under the Merlin Capability Sustainment Plus (MCSP) programme with an option for a further eight.

Working in partnership with the MCSP Prime Contractor Lockheed Martin, the contract, worth approximately £400 million (€ 584 million) to AgustaWestland, will ensure that the Royal Navy's EH101 Merlin HM Mk1 retains its position as the world's most capable maritime patrol helicopter.

The focus of the programme is to enable cost-effective management of future obsolescence of the current aircraft's equipment and systems, and to introduce an Open Systems Architecture (OSA) into the helicopter. The OSA design also enables easy and rapid adaption to future changing requirements, thereby allowing the EH101 Merlin HM Mk1 capability to be sustained until its planned out of service date in the 2030s. This spend-to-save approach is expected to save over £500 million in through life support costs for the Royal Navy's EH101 Merlin HM Mk1 fleet.

The MCSP programme will also see AgustaWestland introduce its Helicopter Electro Actuation Technology (HEAT) onto the EH101 Merlin HM Mk1. HEAT introduces a state of the art, third generation fly by wire system that utilises electrical actuators in place of the existing hydraulic units, to provide the control inputs to the helicopter's rotor systems. This technology reduces pilot workload, cost of ownership, maintenance and weight while giving improved survivability, safety, aircraft handling and agility.

AgustaWestland will be responsible for designing, procuring and integrating the new avionics suite, which will include new cockpit primary flight displays incorporating touch screen technology to deliver increased crew efficiency. AgustaWestland is also responsible for designing and integrating an updated communication and navigation system, and all aspects of air vehicle integration.

The Merlin HM Mk.1 fleet will be progressively upgraded from 2010 and will see the updated and improved aircraft come into service from 2013. The work to upgrade the aircraft will take place at AgustaWestland's Yeovil facility in the UK.

Lockheed Martin and AgustaWestland have worked together since 1991, in partnership with the UK Ministry of Defence, bringing the EH101 Merlin HM Mk.1 into service and providing the Royal Navy with the most capable maritime helicopter in service any where in world today. Forty four EH101 Merlin HM Mk.1s were delivered to the Royal Navy between 1998 and 2002. Since entering service they have demonstrated their outstanding capability in the airborne maritime role during exercises and operations and in particular during Operation Telic in 2003.